

POEMS
BY
J. B. SELKIRK



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POEMS
BY
J. B. SELKIRK.

“Author of Ethics & Aesthetics of Modern
Poetry”

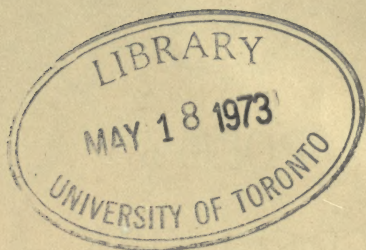
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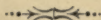
VOL I.

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Introduction.

INTRODUCTION.

"J. B. SELKIRK," that is, James Brown of Selkirk,* was a genuine child of Ettrick Forest. Born on the banks of the Gala, from his childhood to the end of his days Selkirk was his home.** He loved the old Royal Burgh. The historic memories and traditions of the ancient Forest and its picturesque capital hung gracefully on the spire-crowned hillside overlooking the Ettrick, were very tenderly cherished by him. They had a wide and alluring range, sweeping from long before the time when the bold Outlaw Murray told James IV.—

"Thir landis of Ettricke Foreste fair

I wan them from the enemy ;

Like as I wan them, sae will I keep them,

Contrair a' kingis in Christentie."—

* It is not generally known that his pen-name, "J. B. Selkirk," arose out of a printer's mistake at the beginning of his literary career. But he liked the name, and so it remained.

* * Born 1832.

Died Xmas Day, 1904.

down through the heroic but disastrous Flodden period when

“ The Flowers o’ the Forest were a’ wede away,”

on to the time when Sir Walter Scott—then recently appointed to the Sherifffdom of Selkirk—made the “ Last Minstrel ” pour forth his “lay”—

“ Where Newark’s stately tower

Looks out from Yarrow’s birchen bower,”

and subsequently, from Abbotsford, flung the glory of his name over the region which had already become classic soil. “ J. B. Selkirk ” breathed the spirit and heard the mystic music of the scene. Ettrick and rueful Yarrow, wistful and winsome, were as meat and drink to him. He knew them, every mile and mood, as one knows the well-thumbed pages of a soul-compelling book.

Let me quote from the Additional Poems a few verses of *Vita Umbratilis* (2) Vol. II. pp. 149-151—a simple self-revealing lyric.

I seek no earthly praise,

To give me aid ;

Rather the silent ways,

The quiet shade,

Where no vain word may thwart

Thy voice within my heart.

I envy not the wise.
Who would unveil
Those deeper mysteries
Our hearts assail.
Life's darkest paths are meet,
If Thou but guide our feet.

Nor riches will I seek
With their display ;
I only would bespeak
Some little way
My daily wants above,
To comfort those I love.

.
The great star-curtain drawn
Across the night !
The mighty wings of dawn
Flashing its light
Upon the mountain's brow !
And Thou, my God, and Thou !

I had the pleasure of personal intercourse with the Poet ; and though all unnecessary for those who personally knew him, yet, for the sake of the ampler circle of his appreciative readers beyond, one may be excused for saying that he was a genial, unpretentious, high-souled, and lovable man. Some eight and twenty years ago I was asked by the late Mr George Lewis, J.P., Selkirk, to write for his paper, the *Southern Reporter*, a notice of J. B. Selkirk's poems issued in 1883. I did so. And what I wrote then I find

is substantially what I would wish to write now as a brief introduction to the present volumes:—

From the *Southern Reporter*, September 6th, 1883.—Poets—and J. B. Selkirk is a true poet—find articulate voice for what less gifted mortals can but see and feel. We have a reminiscence. On a point of vantage in the suburbs of the royal burgh, we stood one happy August evening rapt with the rich beauty of the setting sun over the Ettrick hills. Beneath was a heather-purpled hill flanked on either hand with comely heights and fields draped gracefully with sylvan beauty; above, the clouds were barred and flecked and spired with lustrous gold, while behind the gilded portals stretched clean away a soft, pale realm of light. Fresh, or rather jaded, from months of incessant professional work, with sympathy perhaps somewhat akin to Wordsworth's when he wrote

“ My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky,”

we seemed to glide across the vale right through the closing gates of purpling gold—away, away, into the peaceful infinite beyond. We had the vision treasured, unworded, yet bright as any Turner ever limned, when, in the last verse of this volume we found it something like articulate—

In every sunset's golden flight,
The purple domes, the shining spires,
The long sweet fields of level light,
We see the home of our desires.

True! Yet also not “the home” exactly. If not

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too fanciful, taking another figure, rather the light shot through one of God's great cathedral windows—calm, majestic, silent, and charged with rapture for light-attuned spirits; while the glory and the gladness—the real home—are beyond with Him who gives to those who can decipher the rich illuminations of his hands, such fair foreshadowings of the inheritance that fadeth not away. From the same piece, "Out of the Darkness" take—

Oh! who can understand,
That voice—a whisper at the most—
Which brings, as from a far-off land,
The sense of something we have lost?

Is earth itself not rich with dreams
Of unknown oceans, golden isled,
For those who hold the holier gleams
And elder instincts of the child?

Turn where we will, 'tis all the same,—
The trackless wind, the heaving sea;
The mighty rivers—all we name
Are emblems of eternity.

Ask of the snow-clad mountain peak,
What means the world? no voice replies;
The hoary summit does not speak,
But points thee mutely to the skies.

Nay more; stand there amid the snows,
And strain to listening all thy powers;
And hear the language no man knows,
The murmur of a world not ours.

These brought up as kindred in spirit, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's beautiful

“I have not so far left the coasts of life
To travel inland, that I cannot hear
That murmur of the outer infinite
Which unweaned babies smile at in their sleep
When wondered at for smiling.”

The poem, however, which occupies only a few pages should be read as a whole. To snatch verses is like lifting pieces from a fair mosaic—you mar the beauty, do it as you will. But these two—

Take this, the truth all truths above,
He never held the sacred fire
Who knew the limits of his love,
Nor wished it vaster, holier, higher.
And then, when death takes those away
Who stood beside us in the strife;
Ah, then! shines out the great new day,
The one reality of life.

Turning to the beginning, “The Songs of Yarrow” have the rich aroma of that song-sacred region, and form a fresh garland by which it will be long adorned.

Oh, Yarrow! garlanded with rhyme
That clothes thee in a mournful glory,
Though sunsets of an elder time
Had never crowned thee with a story.
Still would I wander by thy stream,
Still listen to the lonely singing,
That gives me back the golden dream
Through which old echoes yet are ringing.

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Love's sunshine! sorrow's bitter blast!
Dear Yarrow, we have seen together;
For years have come, and years have past,
Since first we met among the heather.

The best, the dearest, all have gone,
Gone like the bloom upon the heather,
And left us singing here alone,
Beside life's cold and winter weather.

“The Reiver's Ride” is a conception admirably representative of a vanished order of things. A youthful, love-linked pair sprung from feud-estranged families—the Cessfords and the Scotts—

Argued not,
But rode into the rain together.

Till on by Ettrick's deeper flood,
While fierce and fiercer raged the weather,
We reached the Chapel in the Wood. *
And there, beneath the holy rood
Our sacred promises made good,
That night we rode in rain together.

And happier bride-groom, happier bride,
There never rode in rain together.

But days have come, and days have gone.
With summer suns and winter weather;
When now I ride, I ride alone—

* Seleschirke.

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The grass upon your grave has grown,
And many a weary year has flown,
Since we two rode in rain together.

“Death in Yarrow,” is a quiet, domestic idyl finely touched with the spirit of the “dowie houms.” It is a gem of its kind. Its fine pathetic *innerliness* creeps round the heart as gently as we have seen the mist enfold the Yarrow hills; and from mist and “een” alike “the drappin’ rain” fittingly may fa’. We wish the author had given us more of the kind, and that he had added one verse to this, softly and tenderly luminous wi’ the licht frae abune. However, as we read the last verse—

And now the lang day’s dune,
And the night’s begun to fa’,
And the bonnie harvest mune
Rises up on Bowerhope Law.
It’s a bonnie warlt this,
But it’s no’ for me at a’,
For a’ thing’s gane amiss
Sin’ his mother gaed awa’—

we thought of the “harvest home” for which, in his aimless evening “daunder,” the bereaved husband no doubt now longed, and of the chastened light of hallowed memories in which the heart was insphered, and in which he went on his lone dowie way—aye, *sair fu’till* about his dear motherless boy, for—

Introduction.

In a' the water-gate
Ye couldna find his marrow—
There wasna' ane his mate
In Ettrick Shaws or Yarrow.
But he hasna' now the look
He used to hae ava ;
He's grown sae little buik
Sin' his mother gaed awa.

I mak' his pickle meat—
And I think I mak' it weel—
And I warm his little feet
When I hap him i' the creel ;
And he kisses me fu' couthie,
For he downa sleep at a',
Till he hauds up his bit mouthie,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

And then I dander oot,
When I can do nae mair,
And walk the hills aboot,
I dinna aye ken where ;
For my hairt's wi' ane abune—
And the ane is growin' twa—
He's dwined sae sair, sae sune,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

We give special thanks for this, with its pure vernacular ; but like *Oliver Twist* we have the audacity to ask for " more ! "

In a border of our garden we found one day, beneath an evergreen, a little rustic grave. It was set round with twigs, and faded fern fronds

softly fringed it, while at the head a paper tablet fastened on the twigs, bore, in the imperfect caligraphy of a little one of seven summers, the following epitaph:—

In memory of
POOR DICK,
Who died May 15th, 1883.
BE KIND TO ME.

A little song bird had, it appeared, come to an untimely end, and childhood's generous hands had rescued the remains from the destroyer, and here inurned them 'neath the shady tree. How came it that this forgotten incident was revived by reading the following moss-rose-bud of song gemmed with a dewy tear?

A little faded photograph,
And a curl of golden hair,
With half a dozen broken toys
Beside an empty chair—
O God! is this the whole that's left
Out of a life so fair?

Was it that as Poor Dick's last song had gone away up into the skies, so the "life so fair" had gone

"Where the flowers never fade,
And the leaves never fall,
And the sun never sets,
And the joys never pall?"

We have but touched the margin of this goodly volume—presented only a single spray of

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the stately tree, a few of the humbler flowers from the well-furnished garden—but, for the present, though regretfully, we must stop.

But in closing, let us add of the whole volume, that while true and strong, these poems are also often exquisitely tender. A vigorous hand is at work, but with a poetic delicacy of touch that can be

“Soft as the fa’ o’ fairy feet.”

There is heart in the book; and subtle heart revealings are there as well as fine culture. Withal there pervades it a rich deep undertone akin to that which the open ear can detect in nature even in her brightest moods. This gives a special and enduring charm. While the tree is vigorous you can generally discern withered leaves; while the fragrance is exquisitely rich, you feel the rose has been crushed; the sun shines brightly, but it seems somehow to glisten on tears; and amidst all the grandeur and glory of the heavens above and the earth beneath there is heard, as he puts it, “The murmur of a world not ours,” or, as it is in *Aurora Leigh*, “The murmur of the outer infinite,” and the wistful echoing of it all in the poet’s soul. Something has gone from him, and with pensive yet right hopeful heart he bravely makes toward it. Deep calleth unto deep—the mystic deep within to the vast profound without. For the true poet is a kind of microcosm of the universe, and pulsates in sympathy with its travail. He touches at the quick that element which “makes

the whole world kin." J. B. Selkirk has done this, and much in this volume will live. But let us not forget the fact that He who fashioned us, and all things, has met our deep far reaching need in Him of whom Goethe wrote

" The Lord hath arisen,
Sorrow no longer ;
Temptation hath tried Him,
But he was the stronger.
Happy, happy victory !
Love, submission, self-denial
Marked the strengthening agony,
Marked the purifying trial ;
The grave is no prison,
The Lord hath arisen."

In the miscellaneous poems, the author's opinions on churches, creeds, preachers, &c., are perhaps unnecessarily drastic. Poets, however, greatly gifted though they be in their own domain, are not generally trustworthy theologians. With the creed embraced in the above extract from Faust in a man's heart, however, he will not be likely to go far wrong.

And may we further say that, from our perusal of this volume, we have somehow got the conviction that in the *repertoire* of J. B. Selkirk, there are, or ought to be, songs that would

" Sweet in Zion glide,"

Would that he would give us some, wedding true poetic strength to the purely sacred, and the warm

luminosity of sanctified poetic vision to language, as in these poems—pure, clean-cut, and clear as a well-formed crystal!

The volume will stimulate and delight and soothe, and also sometimes startle, perhaps alarm, you for a moment; but it is a rare book. Even the sun has spots, and like those on this book, if any there be, they are on its face.

So in 1883. Since then he writes, Vol. II. p. 148—

The risen Sun has chased away our fears.
A living light is on the mountain's brow,
Have mercy on us, Lord, we know Thee now.

And now that the Poet's last song here has been sung, the words of the late Principal Shairp of St Andrew's spring up in one's mind—

“High souls have come and gone,
And on these braes have thrown
Thé light of their glorious fancies,
And left their words to dwell
And mingle with the spell
Of a thousand old romances.”

Among such “high souls” we place J. B. Selkirk as one of the immortal minstrels of “Ettricke Foreste Fair.”

The present volumes contain a number of poems which have not appeared in recent issues and are little known, and some which have not appeared in book form before.

W. HUME ELLIOT.

LONDON, CORONATION WEEK,

1911.

Songs of Garrow and Ellrick.

“There is the famous stream twinkling in the sun.
What stream and valley was ever so be-sung ! You
wonder at first why this has been, but the longer you
look the less you wonder.” — ‘*Horæ Subsecivæ*,’ Dr
JOHN BROWN.



A SONG OF YARROW.

SEPTEMBER, and the sun was low,
The tender greens were flecked with yellow,
And autumn's ardent after-glow
Made Yarrow's uplands rich and mellow.

Between me and the sunken sun,
Where gloaming gathered in the meadows,
Contented cattle, red and dun,
Were slowly browsing in the shadows.

And out beyond them Newark reared
Its quiet tower against the sky,
As if its walls had never heard
Of wassail-rout or battle cry.

O'er moss-grown roofs that once had rung
To reiver's riot, Border brawl,
The slumberous shadows mutely hung,
And silence deepened over all.

Above the high horizon bar
A cloud of golden mist was lying,
And over it a single star
Soared heavenward as the day was dying.

No sound, no word, from field or ford,
Nor breath of wind to float a feather,
While Yarrow's murmuring waters poured
A lonely music through the heather.

In silent fascination bound.
As if some mighty spell obeying,
The hills stood listening to the sound,
And wondering what the stream was saying.

What secret to the inner ear,
What happier message, was it bringing,
With more of hope, and less of fear,
Than men dare mix with earthly singing.

Earth's song it was, yet heavenly growth—
It was not joy, it was not sorrow—
A strange heart-fulness of them both
The wandering singer seemed to borrow

Like one that sings and does not know,
But in a dream hears voices calling,
Of those that died long years ago,
And sings although the tears be falling.

Oh Yarrow ! garlanded with rhyme
That clothes thee in a mournful glory,
Though sunsets of an elder time
Had never crowned thee with a story.

Still would I wander by thy stream,
Still listen to the lonely singing,
That gives me back the golden dream
Through which old echoes yet are ringing.

Love's sunshine ! sorrows bitter blast !
Dear Yarrow, we have seen together ;
For years have come, and years have past,
Since first we met among the heather.

Ah ! those, indeed, were happy hours
When first I knew thee, gentle river ;
But now thy bonnie birken bowers
To me, alas, are changed for ever !

The best, the dearest, all have gone,
Gone like the bloom upon the heather,
And left us singing here alone,
Beside life's cold and winter weather.

I, too, pass on, but when I'm dead
Thou still shalt sing by night and morrow,
And help the aching heart and head
To bear the burden of its sorrow.

And summer's flowers shall linger yet
 Where all thy mossy margins guide thee ;
 And minstrels, met as we have met,
 Shall sit and sing their songs beside thee.

BOWHILL.

A REIVER'S RIDE.

OH day of days, when we were young !
 With hearts that laughed at wind and weather,
 That day, the gathered guests among,
 When you and I, while songs were sung,
 Each to a ready saddle sprung,
 And rode into the rain together.

An endless, fruitless feud, I wot,
 With vengeance vowed in every weather,
 Between the Cessfords and the Scott,
 A foolish quarrel, long begot,
 Had barred our love ; we argued not,
 But rode into the rain together.

What though the skies were frowning black,
And dark and sunless was the weather,
And heaven was filled with driving rack,
We thought not once of turning back,
That day we left the beaten track,
And rode into the rain together.

Loud clanged the windy gates above,
And yet through all the howling weather,
Soft as the murmur of a dove,
We only heard low words of love,
As foot to foot and glove to glove
We rode into the rain together.

Our way was long, and bleak, and bare —
A trackless road in wintry weather ;
We swam the Tweed beyond Traquair,
And follow will, who follow dare ;
One tried it and we left him there,
And rode away in rain together.

Though tempests blew and waters beat,
We heeded neither wind nor weather,
But held our way through driving sleet,
O'er rocky stream and sinking peat,
For love was strong and life was sweet,
That day we rode in rain together.

Right onward in a wild delight,
For few could follow in such weather,
We never slacked our steady flight,
Till down from Minchmuir's misty height
Fair Ettrick Forest lay in sight,
As we rode in the rain together.

Where Yarrow's reddening water's roared—
A rugged ride in stormy weather—
Where late our gallant king restored
The outlawed lands of Newark's lord,
By Hangingshaw we crossed the ford,
Still riding in the rain together.

Till on by Ettrick's deeper flood,
While fierce and fiercer raged the weather,
We reached the Chapel in the Wood,†
And there beneath the holy rood
Our sacred promises made good,
That night we rode in rain together.

Once more to saddle, for our ride
Was eastward yet through darkened weather,
Till home beyond sweet Teviot's tide
We rode in moonlight side by side,
And happier bridegroom, happier bride,
There never rode in rain together.

† Seleschirke,

But days have come and days have gone,
With summer suns and winter weather ;
When now I ride, I ride alone—
The grass upon your grave has grown,
And many a weary year has flown,
Since we two rode in rain together.

Young Norman has the eyes and brow—
His mother's son in any weather ;
And Lilian has your lips, I trow ;
And oh, how oft their faces now
Bring back the day we made our vow,
And rode into the rain together.



*THE VALE OF ETTRICK PAST
AND PRESENT.*

Four hundred years ago, this lovely morn,
Fair Ettrick Forest, in her sylvan prime,
Lay basking in the sunny summer clime.
Here where I stand, among the ripened corn,
One might have heard the royal bugle horn,
Or some bluff hunter-poet of the time
Chanting aloud his latest ballad rhyme
Of hero done to death, or maid forlorn.

The Forest's gone ! the world's improved since then !
A forest now of chimneys, Babel-high,
Belch out their blackened breath against the sky.
Take off your hats to Progress, gentlemen !
So runs the world ; but as for me, heigh-ho !
I should have lived four hundred years ago.

DEATH IN YARROW.

I.

It's no the sax month gane,
Sin' a' our cares began—
Sin' she left us here alane,
Her callant and guidman.
It was in the spring she dee'd,
And noo we're in the fa' ;
And sair we struggled wi' t,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

II.

An awfu' blow was that—
The deed that nane can dree ;
And lang and sair we grat
For her we could'na see.
I've aye been strong and fell,
And can stand a gey bit thraw ;
But the laddie's no hisselt'
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

III.

In a' the water-gate
Ye couldna find his marrow—
There wasna ane his mate
In Ettrick Shaws or Yarrow.
But he hasna noo the look
He used to hae ava ;
He's grown sae little buik
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

IV.

I tak' him on my back
In ilka blink o' sun,
Rin roun' about the stack,
And mak'-believe it's fun.
But weel he kens, I warrant,
There's something wrang for a',
He's turned sae auld-farrant
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

V.

For when he's played his fill,
I canna help but see
How he draws his creepie-stool
Aye the closer to my knee ;

And he turns his muckle een
To the picter on the wa',
Wi' a face grown thin and keen,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

VI.

I mak' his pickle meat—
And I think I mak' it weel;
And I warm his little feet,
When I hap him i' the creel;
And he kisses me fu' couthie,
For he downa sleep at a'
Till he hauds up his bit mouthie,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

VII.

And then I dander oot,
When I can dae nae mair,
And walk the hills about,
I dinna aye ken where;
For my hairt's wi' ane abune,
And the ane is growin' twa,
He's dwined sae sair, sae sune,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

VIII.

And noo the long day's dune,
 And the nicht's begun to fa',
 And a bonnie harvest mune
 Rises up on Bourhope Law.
 It's a bonnie warlt this,
 But it's no' for me at a'.
 For a' thing's gane amiss
 Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

GATHERING THE FRAGMENTS.

A little faded photograph,
 And a curl of golden hair,
 With half a dozen broken toys
 Beside an empty chair.—
 O God! is this the whole that's left
 Out of a life so fair?

THE HOMEWARD MAIL.

(A LETTER FROM A SCOTTISH EMIGRANT TO HIS
FRIEND IN ETTRICK.)

Dear Tam, yestreen I got yer letter,
And thank the Lord it fand us better;
For tho' to you I mak' a rhyme o't,
Gude kens we've had an unca time o't.
If after a' that we've come thro'
I were at hame in Ettrick noo,
The final vote for emigration
Wad stand some reconsideration.

And yet we're maybe nane the waur o't;
Things on the whole are haudin' forrit.
Oor land allotment's noo fenced roun',
And bit by bit we're settlin' down;
We've broken grund, we've in oor seed,
We've got a hoose abune oor head,

Sin' last I wrote. My fair, we're busy ;
There's want out here for man and fuzzle ;
Ane hardly kens what first to rin to,
For a' thing here's just to begin to.

Ye mind yon little speakin' body
That got sae fu' on Fauldslope's toddy,
The emigration folk sent roun',
That gied about frae town to town,
Enlargin' on the land o' Goshen
Awaitin' us ayont the ocean.
Eh, Tam ! sic lees that crater tell'd
Paid for't, nae doot ! when he upheld
That everybody comin' here
Had naethin i' the want to fear—
That ilka family wad be guid,
An' a' their needfu' wants providit.
Oor wants, indeed ! when first we landit
We might amais as weel been strandit
On some wild coast, where nae ane kenn'd us,
Wi' naether brie nor toid to fend us ;
Oor every brie, the sma' est portion,
Was made a han' le for extortion ;
And as for aught like bield or bed,
The women were aloo'd a shed

Thank God that's past ; but even yet
We're no' inclined just to forget
The words on emigration's meerits
O'er honest Simpson's halesome speerits ;
The promises the agent made us,
And a' that wad be dune to aid us,—
“ We'd want for naething, gude nor gear ; ”
The ill deil claut him for a leear !

If ye should come across the body,
Ye'd better warn him weel that should he
Wi' ony o' oor lads fa' in,
I winna answer for his skin.
Justice at hame he may hae jookit ;
Had he been here his neck wad yeukit.

Tam, ye're an elder ; tell me how
Ye let that crater wag his pow
I' the parish kirk ? Ay, i' the poopit
Ye let him scrauch till he was roopit !
Whatever tempted ye'r kirk-session
To put God's hoose in the possession
O' sic a crater ? Was't the yammer,
The cant o' pheelanthropic glamour,
The sleek, glib-gabbet gospel smirk
Prevailed on ye to gie 'm the kirk ?

A bonnie place to air his lees in !
If yon black hole that leears bleeze in
Should in the lang-run no' trepan him !
The deevil hasna got what's awn him !
Eneuch !—nae mair o' him henceforth ;
He's taen mair paper than he's worth.

And now that we've got by the worst,
I'll answer a' your queries. First,
The question o' oor daily breed,
"Is't a' we like ? Is't a' we need ?"
Second, "How decent folk can thole
Without proveesion for the soul ?"
"God-fearin' folk without a kirk ;
We're surely sittin' i' the mirk."
Thirdly, the subject o' the land—
Is't licht or heavy ? till or sand ?
Wi' endless questions round about it.
And last, can we mak' siller oot o't ?

Weel, to begin wi' what's maist needfu',
Our meat at first was something dreedfu'.
To get your constitution shaken,
Just try twal weeks on tea and bacon.
If that should fail to pu' ye doon,
My word for't, ye're a sturdy loon ;

Wi' naething else for weeks thegither,
Ye'd need an inside made o' leather.

Ye mind yon muckle toosy yokel,
Wull Tamson's callant frae the Brockhill?
At first young Wullie, thinkin't fine
To breakfast every day and dine
On rowth o' bacon ham, and tea,
Devoored it wi' avidity;
And ilka day, or it cam' nicht,
Had putten puns o't oot o' sicht.
Weel, when he'd plyed his knife and fork
Six weeks on naething else than pork,
Wull fell into a kind o' dwam;
When, strange! the very name o' ham
Was puzzen till him. Day by day,
And hour by hour he pined away,
Till white's a sheet, and lean's a hadda',
He crined into a perfect shadda'.
But now, though no' just yet the same,
Oor meals are growin' liker hame.
Of course there's things awantin' here
To Scots folk bred will aye be dear;
A haggis, Tam, wad just be manna,
And mony ane wad sing hosanna,
O'er barley broth and gude pease-banna.

However, after what we've seen
We've little reason to compleen.
We've grand wheat bread, the very wale ;
But eh, man, Tam, it's wersh to kail !

Last month we got our first aitmeal,
And aye sin' syne we're doin' weel ;
E'en Wullie's dwam's a'maist forgot,—
His cure lay i' the parritch pot ;
Sae wi' an aith he's undertaken
Never again to fash wi' bacon,
And half in anger, half in shame
(For, 'deed, he had himsel' to blame),
Wull swears he'll never hae the grace
To look another soo i' the face.

Oor aliment at length dismiss't
The Kirk comes next upon the list ;
And no' without a thought ye reckoned
When ye assigned its place the second.
No' that we gie the speerit's need
A lower rank than daily breed,
Or that we've ever aince forgot
The God abune us ; but oor lot
At first was wi' sic needy craters,
A common thing wi' emigraters,

The bulk o' them as I can vooch
Without a ha'penny in their pooch ;
An' some, to aggravate their waes,
Were no' just o'er weel aff for claes.
Ay, tell't in Ettrick, Tam, my man,
And tell't wi' a' the force ye can ;
Send word to every shiel an' shaw
Frae Cossarshill to Carterhaugh,
That emigration, here or there,
It's hard on them that come oot bare.
To tell the truth, in mony an instance
It's just a scram'le for existence.

Noo Tam, in sick a state o' things,
Amang "the airrows and the slings,"
As Wullie Shakespeare wud hae said it—
When penniless privation's made it
A' but impossible to think
On higher things than meat and drink.—
When destitution's hungry plug
Has cloggit up the speerit's lug,
Afore ye ask the sowl to fecht
Ye first maun put the body richt.
And sae we thought it little guile
To let the Kirk stand by a while,
But stop, I've maybe run my heid
Against the cleric's caulder creed,

That seeks the immortal pairt to cherish,
Although the body pine and perish !
Like mony a creed, its fu' o' grace
Till ance it's seen starvation's face,
When Providence ordeens the wrestle
'Tween yerthen creed and yerthen vessel !
Ay, Tam ! had ye been here to see'd
Wi' me, I think ye wad agreed
Ye canna graft the higher thocht,
Wi' every limb and nerve o'erwrocht,
On him that wars a deadly strife
Wi' the necessities o' life.
It's no religion, Tam, it's cant,
To preach to gapin' rags and want ;
A man wi' naething in his wame,
If sowl he has, it's no' at hame.
It stands to reason, common-sense,
And poverty's experience,
Afore ye ply him wi' the Carritch
Ye'd better start him wi' his parritch.

If we've dune wrang, I'm wae to grieve ye,
Sae noo I'll hasten to relieve ye.
We've just secured accommodation
To haud a gey bit congregation.
The other night we held a meetin'
To gie the ha' it s first hoose-heatin'.

Eh, man ! it was a happy nicht ;
I never saw a finer sicht
When man and maid stood up to sing
That grand " Auld Hunder " ! Tam, by jing,
Ye never made the rafters ring
In Ettrick Kirk wi' sic a birl ;
'Twad dune ye gude to hear the skirl, —
The like o' t's no' been kenn'd for praise
In Ettrick-head sin' Boston's * days.
What maybe help'd to blaw the flame,
The auld tune had the sough o' hame.

How is't, Tam, when I write to you
My news is never halflins through,
Till a' at ance the paper's dune ;
And though the muse be in sic tune
That I could sit and rhyme a mune,
I e'en maun stop and fauld my letter,
And for the rest remain your debtor.
About the Kirk, I've lots to say
That maun be said some other day ;
If what's been said on't seems uncertain,
What's yet to come may prove divertin'.

* Boston, the minister of Ettrick, and author of 'The Fourfold State,' used on occasion, it is said, to conduct the psalmody himself.

We send ye a' oor kind regairds ;
 May a' the luck that's on the cairds
 Attend your life and life's concerns ;
 Oor love to Jenny and the bairns.
 The Lord maintain your cruse and creel,
 And, for the present, fare ye weel.

THE LAST EPISTLE TO TAMMUS.

(FIVE YEARS AFTER)

DEAR Tam, last mail the wife wad tell
 That I had had a gey bit spell
 O' wakish health. It's no' like me,
 That a' my life hae aye been free
 Frae troubles, and was never kent
 To hae a serious complent.
 I never tuke to bed but wance.
 And that was but an orra chance.

Ye mind o' fishin', you and me—
We had been catchin' twae or three—
Among the rocks ahint Brigend.
When, castin' oot, wi' extra bend
I slippit off a muckle stane,
And brak', ye mind, my collar-bane.
I've never been laid up sin' syne,
Nor yet afor'd, that I can min'.

But this is waur; I'm off the streicht,
Week after week I'm losin' weicht,
Until at last, it stands to raison,
I'm just a thing for hingin' claes on.
We've had a doctor, clever man,
And he's dune a' that doctor can,—
A man respeckit near and fer;
His grannie was a Sprouston Ker.
Ye see I'll no' forsake my order;
Till daith, I'll aye uphaud the Border.
We've some grand specimens oot here,
For still they come, frae year to year.
Ane disna need to hear them talk,
Ye ken them by their very walk.
There's Gibbie Elliot, Kinmont Rob,
Aye rouch and raucle for a job;
They'll sleep as sound ahint a dyke
As row d in blankets on a tyke,

There's Telfer, Douglas, Learmont, Scott,
And thaim that joined the Ancrum lot.
Wi' siccan names there's little fear
That Border bluid will fail oot here.

The Border? Hoots ! I'm off the stot,
Where was I ? for I've clean forgot.
I have ye,—I was skin and bone,
It was the doctor we were on.
Weel, every time he cam' alang
He couldna find oot what was wrang,
And yet when he took stock o' me
He didna like the look o' me.
Although nae doot I had a teasick,
It's no', said he, a case for pheesick ;
So there the doctor's treatment ends,
But guess ye what he recommends !
"What say ye to a voyage hame !"
Oh, Tam, it set my heart aflame ;
And as for answer. I was dumb.—
The word was there, it wadna come.
I fand my senses turnin' dizzy ;
I glower'd at him, and then at Lizzie.
Out spak' the doctor, fair and square,
"Gudeman, I can do naething mair.
It's after carefu' keen reveesion
I've come at length to this decision.

I've had some cases like your ain
Where a' my treatment's been in vain.
Wi' lads and lassies naethin's wantin',
But auld folk dinna stand transplantin'.
I'll bate a shilling, when ye're there,
Ye'll rally in your native air."

A week's gane by; the maitter's settled,
I'm comin' hame: I'm better fettled,
Fresher lookin', no sae yallow,—
That doctor chield's a clever fallow.
However, Tam, 'tween me and you,
To shame the deil and say what's true,
My trouble's been—the greater pairt—
A rush o' Ettrick at the hairt.
Ye think I shouldna fashed mysel'
Wi' thoughts o' hame, but nane can tell
What little things may yet torment ye
Till ance ye've left them a' ahint ye.
My hairt, though ye may ca' me fule,
It's a' in Ettrick but the hule.
The country here's a perfect staw,
It's no' the least like oors ava;
A level plain without a bend on't,
Wi' nae beginnin' and nae end on't;
As fer's the eye can look upon,
The land's as flat's a barley-scone.

It's no' like oors, wi' heichs and howes,
Wi' shelter'd neuks and grassy knowes.
The water tae, sae douf and dule,
No' here a stream and there a pule ;
Until ye test it wi' a straw,
Ye hardly ken it moves ava.

Ah, Tam ! gie me a Border burn
That canna rin without a turn,
And wi' its bonnie babble fills
The glens amang oor native hills,
How men that ance have ken'd about it
Can leeve their after lives without it,
I canna tell, for day and nicht
It comes unca'd for to my sicht.
I see't this moment, plain as day,
As it comes bickerin' o'er the brae,
Atween the clumps o' purple heather,
Glistenin' in the summer weather,
Syne divin' in below the grun',
Where, hidden frae the sicht and sun,
It gibbers like a deed man's ghost
That clamours for the licht it's lost,
Till oot again the loupin' limmer
Comes dancin' doon through shine and shimmer
At headlang pace, till wi' a jaw
It jumps the rocky waterfa',

And cuts sic cantrips in the air,
The picture-pentin' man's despair ;
A rountree bus' oot o'er the tap o't,
A glassy pule to kep the lap o't,
While on the brink the blue harebell
Keeks o'er to see its bonnie sel',
And sittin' chirpin' a' its lane
A water-waggy on a stane,
Ay, penter lad, thraw to the wund
Your canvas, this is holy grund :
Wi' a' its highest airt achieevin',
The picter's deed, and this is leevin'.

When at my warst, my sairest plichts
Took aye the form o' sleepless nichts.
Then what mair nat'ral than look back,
And wander o'er the beaten track ?
Sae in my mind, when a' was mirk,
I just begude wi' Ettrick Kirk.
Eh man ! I like yon bonnie corner—
For buildiness it's maist byor'ner.
If back again to Ettrick spared,
Believe me, Tam, in yon kirkyaird
I'd rather lie within the year
Than be Methuselah oot here.
It's well, when through this vale o' tears,

To think we'll lie wi' oor forebears ;
To have oor ain folk side by side
Mak's daith itsel' less ill to bide ;
And could we rest wi' hairts mair leal
Than Jamie Hogg and Tibbie Shiel,
And mony mair we baith could name,
As dear, though little ken'd to fame ?

Then in my mind I tak' a turn
Frae Thirlestane House to Rankleburn,
On tufty Tushielaw's hillside
The thick-ribbed ruins still abide
Where Adam Scott, that menseless thief—
Scourge o' the Border—cam' to grief.
But I must up and off again,
By Crosslee, Newburgh. Deloraine,
And doon through Hyndhope and the Shaws,
Past bonnie hazel banks and haws,
To Singlie burn ; the spot near by
Where Jamie Telfer lost his kye,
Till wi' the help o' bold Buccleuch
And Wat o' Halden's retinue
They sought a prey wi' muckle speed,
Twice coontit, back to fair Dodhead,
And show'd Bewcastle's bold bravado
The metal Ettrick men were made o'

And then, is there a bonnier bit
On ony water, head to fit,
Where, tumblin' doon the rugged streams,
The lashin' water froths and creams,
Till o'er the salmon-loup it spins
'Tween green Helmburn and Kirkhope linns,
Where Ettrick rins?

Then past Brigend
And fair Howford it tak's a bend,
And wanders through wi' gentler turn
The quiet haughs o' Hutlerburn;
Then on its way it gi'es a ca'
At Fauldshope, Aikwood, Carterha',
Where fairy-fettered young Tamlane
Through Love's great pow'r was freed again.
And noo we've broucht oor wanderin' feet
To where the Forest waters meet,
Where Yarrow's sorrow-laden sang,
That 'mong her hills has linger't lang,
At length yields up her soul—at rest,
A maiden on her lover's breast.

That meeting-pule to me was dear,
I mind its waters deep and clear;
I've fish't it often as a callant,
Wi' muckle zeal and little talent,

The native floor's, the auld-worlt stories,
The lyric love, the Border forays,
Its whisperin' eddies, ins and oots,
Spak' ever mair to me than troots.
Fair Water I fairer though it be
Clad in its daithless minstrelsy.
Yet though its sang shall never wane,
It has a beauty o' its ain ;
I see its banks, I hear its voices,
As wanderin' onward it rejoices,
And though its music's far frae me,
And though I ken it canna be,
The tear my een a moment blin's,
I hear the linties in the whins
Where Ettrick rins.

But there, I'm dune.

D. V. I'll hae a crack wi' sune.

The wife sends love to you and yours.

I'm glad to say we're leavin' oors

Contentit, doin' weel, and happy.

There's plenty room here ; naething scrappy.

If man's chief end be gatherin' gear,

There's nae doubt ye can mak' it here.

But post-time's up, sae I'm awa.

Fareweel, and joy be wi' a'.

LOVE IN YARROW.

I.

YOU tell me I am losing time,
I'm taking life too lightly,
My lamp let flicker into rhyme
Which should be burning brightly ;

That I have left life's serious call
For something more alluring,
Mistaking the ephemeral
For that which is enduring.

This change, my friend, that you have seen,
May seem to you mysterious ;
With me, however, it has been
Well thought upon and serious.

I too have burned the midnight oil,
 In painful soul-debating ;
 I too have turned the stubborn soil
 You now are cultivating.

I gave it up because I found
 'Twas mostly self-delusion,—
 Word-spinning in an endless round,
 That yielded no conclusion.

I'm sick of philosophic search
 Into the roots of being,
 The strain to see from earthly perch
 What lies beyond earth's seeing.

I've dropped life's riddles, every one,
 That wind and warp the soul of us ;
 The children, dancing in the sun,
 Are wiser than the whole of us.

You tell me, too, that thought is thin
 That knows alone life's gladness ;
 "Eyes cannot rightly see within
 Till sanctified by sadness."

There's less of wisdom, friend, than sound.
In the pedantic folly
That deems those views of life profound
Because they're melancholy.

Whence is the source of all our life,
Whence has been, shall be ever?
The sweetener of our mortal strife,
The Godhead's living river?

The eternal waters from above
No taints of sadness borrow;
The perfect wisdom, perfect love,
It never knew a sorrow.

God's gladness is but light afar,
That streams the wide world over,
It washes now the farthest star,
And gilds this field of clover.

What man, depicting heaven's abode,
Would give it sorrow's features?
On earth, too, they are likest God,
The happiest of His creatures.

In this our morbid, meddling age
 Of peevish introspection,
 We feed too much upon the page
 That nourishes dejection.

You're gaining something from your books,
 No doubt ; but in addition,
 You're losing, too, your old good looks
 And happy disposition.

Where, think you, will this brooding end ?
 Already you look phthisical ;
 You're paying with your health, my friend,
 For studies metaphysical.

Then take an older man's advice
 Come out into the garden,
 Leave morbid self-analysis
 And psychologic burden.

For who would burrow like a mole,
 And seek the dark in day-time,
 Or rest content with winter's dole
 When he could laugh in May-time.

Come out and rest your wearied eyes,—
Trust me you'll never rue it ;
Read nature's book in field and skies,
As happier creatures do it.

Throw up, my friend, your fallacy
That gladness must be shallow ;
Come, close your books for once with me,
And let your mind lie fallow.

There's Galawater, Yarrow's vale,
Or Ettrick near beside us ;
We're but an hour from Teviotdale,
Tweed's pleasant stream to guide us.

Come, one or other let us choose,—
Sound health demands these pauses ;
And possibly your gloomy views
Have but material causes.

'Twix want of health and doleful thought
There's often correlation ;
Solemnity sometimes is nought
But sluggish circulation.

Life's highest glimpses still are caught
Where blood is warm and wealthy ;
Unhealth begets unhealthy thought—
The thoughts of health are healthy.

A truce to preaching. Let us go,
We'll talk no more of sorrow ;
We'll get the horses out, and know
Once more the braes of Yarrow.

II.

He met his fate on Yarrow braes,
Small blame to me or credit ;
I could not move him from his ways,—
An unseen trifle did it.

Love's eyes with dewy light suffused,
Dealt out from silken lashes,
The fire that always has reduced
Philosophy to ashes !

Philosophy, said I? Alas !
The girl but gave a toss of her
Delightful head ; then presto, pass !
And where was our philosopher ?

No knight that ever lived in song,
Or groaned beneath love's arrow,
More keenly felt the fatal prong
In ballad-haunted Yarrow.

By sweet St Mary's slopes of green
The god waylaid and tricked him,
And on my word I've seldom seen
A more ridiculous victim.

Philosophers are easily crazed;
At first he did not show it,
But wandered for a week half-dazed,
And then he turned poet.

Such poems too, for workmanship—
Much worse than ever I did—
Two rondeaus on her upper lip,
And one upon her eyelid.

He tried again his studious joys
When comfortably married,
But when his pretty wife brought boys,
Philosophy miscarried.

'Twas that which dealt the final blow,
 And fairly closed the portals
 On his philosophy ; and now
 He's much like other mortals.

For out of books, from which before
 He built his melancholy,
 His boys build castles on the floor,
 And play at rolly-polly.

Oh, great are the Philosophies !
 But deep are Nature's Forces !—
 To-day I saw him on his knees,
 They said the game "was horses."



LOOKING BACK IN YARROW.

A GOLDEN WEDDING.

GUDEWIFE, we're gettin' auld ;
It's fifty years and mair
Sin' I was young and yald,
And ycu, Jean, young and fair.
We started for the manse,
The road lay through the heather
That day we took oor chance
As man and wife thegither.

Ye mind the dance at e'en,
We muster'd thirty-seeven ;
I sometimes wonder, Jean,
Hoo mony o' them's leevin' ;
The dancers and the singers,
The whole o' them that's spared
Ye can count them on your fingers—
The rest's in the kirkyaird.

A fifty years' recruit
Leaves married couples few ;
Death rings the auld anes oot,
And Time rings in the new.
Auld friends asunder drift,
Like leaves in autumn swirl'd,
Until to them that's left
It's like another world.

Years bring new names, new blude,
To fill the empty places,
And wash oot like a flude
The auld fameeliar faces.
New houses, tae, hae sprung
Around us, cauld and peekit
Wi' slates. When we were young
The feck o' them were theekit.

In sawin', sheerin', kirnin',
Machines noo bear the gree,—
But what's the use o' girmnin' ?
They'll no fash you and me.
Yet guid auld ways and true
It's sad to see negleckit,
When what's ta'en up for new
Sae muckle o't's affeckit.

Just look at oor new schulin'—

I carena hoo it's honour't ;

A hantle o't's just fulin',

And knocks the bairn donnart.

I'll grant ye ane in ten

The system forces forrit :

It suits the few, but then

The bulk o' them's the waur o't.

No' every change we make

Can aye be for the better ;

In some we but forsake

The speerit for the letter.

The mind may cram and feed

On endless information—

Unless some sense gang wi'd

It's no richt eddication !

Wi' buird schules round us set

Where ilka little bantam

Maun gape his gab and get

The regulation quantum.

Wi' their diploma'd lair,

Inspector for adviser,

They'll maybe stap in mair,

But deil a' ane's the wiser

Sic trash oor young folk read !
 Wae's me ! the worlt maun alter
Sair for the waur indeed
 That disna ken Sir Walter.
There's Thacker'y at his best,
 We'll no deny he's thorough,
But after him the rest
 Are puir beside the Shirra.

But, Jean, are they the gainers
 W' a' their booin', keekin',
Their Anglicees'd fine mainners,
 And clippit ways o' speakin' ?
Low'd ! hoo can auld folk bend
 To their new-fangl't bustle ?
The very tunes oo' kenned
 Are no the tunes they whustle !

And oh ! the siller wared
 On Sunday claes, bates a' ;
Jock dresses like the laird,
 And Kirstie just as braw.
If she but wadna roose
 That tongue o' hers sae ready,
Naebody wad jalouse
 She wasna born a leddy.

Warst change o' a' that's made !
Yarrow's sequester'd byeway,
Oor ain romantic glade,
Turn'd to a common highway.
The noisy vulgar thrang,
They've gliff'd awa' the fairies,
Sin' a' the worlt maun gang
And picnic at St Mary's.

The laverock i' the lift,
That tuned "the Shepherd's" lay,
Noo stints his gudely gift,
Or tak's it far away,—
Leavin' his lowly berth,
Till, by their clamour driven,
The song once heard on earth
Is only heard in heaven.

Langsyne, aboon the brig,
Nae wheel but on a barrow,
And Dr Russell's gig,
Was ever seen in Yarrow.
Noo coaches, cadgers' cairts,
And carriages galore,
Hailin' frae a' the airts,
Gang rumlin' by the door,

An endless noisy roon'
The lee-lang simmer day ;
Ane's glad when nicht comes doon,
And sends them a' away.
But some o' them, puir things,
Are shilpit-like and spare,—
It's that, nae doubt, that brings
Them here for caller air.

Nor can we baulk their cause,
Or blame them a' thegither ;
For where's the wund that blaws
Like what comes o'er the heather ?
Sae, Jean, we'll haud content,
For changes aye maun be ;
There's maybe mair gude in't
Than auld folk weel can see.

And whether richt or wrang,
To flyte on them, or fleer,
It's hardly worth a sang
For a' the time we're here.
Argy-bargy to the last,
Ye'll find there's aye twa ways in't ;
The young lauch at the past,
The auld anes at the present.

But pittin' what we've seen
Wi' what we see thegither,
Is't no' a mercy, Jean,
We're spared to ane anither?
When auld, and laid aside,
The changes that attack us
Are no' sae ill to bide
When we've a friend to back us.

And then, when comes the change
That comes to a' the same,—
For, far as we may range,
"The gloamin' brings us hame,"—
There's aye this blessin' in't
For auld folk, Jeanie, woman—
The ane that's left ahint
Canna be lang o' comin'.

Sae we'll just dander doon:
The first that gets the ca'
We'll leave to Him aboon,
Wha kens what's best for a'.

A BORDER RAID.

(UNDER QUEEN VICTORIA.)

A dark-eyed daughter of the South
Across our northern border came,
With quiet brow, and most sweet mouth,
And eyes that held a tender flame.

The Saxon stopt his merry troll
To look at her—ay, lack-a-day !
He looked at her, and for his soul
He could not turn his eyes away.

That speechless parley, years ago,
Between the black eyes and the blue,
But why repeat what all men know ?—
The old, old story, ever new.

And so they lived, and loved, and died,
And passed away into the night ;
Like names upon the sand, the tide
Came up and washed them out of sight.

Their girls are women ; stalwart sons
Are seeking each his own career ;
And so the restless world runs
From day to day, from year to year.

Lord, what a speck of time is life !
'Tis but a children's holiday ;
We play at houses, man and wife,
Till, one by one, we're called away.

It is not long for any ; some
Have hardly tried an earthly flight
Before their little faces come
To kiss us for the long " good night."

There must be life beyond earth's bound,—
Its very briefness here compels
Our faith to seek a surer ground :
Life would not have a meaning else.

Oh break for me, thou second birth
The bar that keeps us from our dead ;
For I am weary of the earth,
And fain would have the riddle read.

*AN APPEAL FROM YARROW.**

AND is it true? And will they come
 With pick and spade and barrow,
 To dig a grave beneath the hills
 For thy dear waters, Yarrow?

Where Scott and Wordsworth sang the songs
 Whose echoes still are ringing;
 The valley where "the Shepherd" heard
 His deathless "skylark" singing,—

Oh, touch it not; it fills the heart
 With memories that harrow,
 To think that we shall hear no more
 Thy babbling music, Yarrow.

Where every step is holy ground,
 Enshrined in Border story;
 Here, sacred to a lover's vows,
 And there, to battle gory.

* Written whilst a Bill to supply Edinburgh and district
 with water taken from Yarrow was before Parliament.

Where, down by Deuchar's dowie houms,
The bravest knight in Yarrow
Fell fighting on the bloody sward,
All for his "winsome marrow."

Where Cockburn's widow sat beside
Her murdered hero weeping,
"The moul' upon his yellow hair"
Her woman's fingers heaping.

Where Margaret and her lover fled—
Black Douglas and the seven
On ringing hoofs behind them roared
Their mad appeals to heaven.

Where not a stream that glides between
Gray rocks with mosses hoary,
But seems to babble to the air
The burden of its story.

The Lake! oh let not that be made
A thing of pipes and sluices;
Let something live for beauty's sake,
Unmixed with baser uses.

Still let it live in fancy's heart,
A haunt for happy fairies,
And make no wretched reservoir
Of lovely lone St. Mary's.

Disturb not thou its silent deeps,
 Nor yet its gleaming shallows,
 The heavenly rest upon its breast,
 The memories it hallows.

The place is more to us than you,
 Who have been goers, comers ;
 For we have lived our lives in it—
 Its winters and its summers.

We knew it all when we were young,
 And that sets memory sighing,
 For now, with bairns about our knees,
 The valley where we're dying.

Oh, touch it not ! but let it be
 As nature has arrayed it ;
 As softening time has sanctified,
 And poet's fancy made it.

A vale where world-worn weary feet
 May come to rest or roam in ;
 Where pilgrim love has found so much,
 And *we* have found a home in.

AUTUMN LEAVES.

WHAT sadness clothes the falling year
When skies are red and woods are sere,
And joys are fled that late were here,
And only mournful winds are calling.
When sorrow's song is heard for mirth,—
For saddest thoughts have sweetest birth
When autumn leaves are falling.

'Twas down beside the Fairy Well
Alone came gentle Isobel
To meet her lover in the dell,
When evening winds were softly calling.
No other sound in earth or air
Disturbed the silence everywhere,
While autumn leaves were falling.

And where she came the golden sheen
Of arrowy sunset struck between
Thick autumn branches red and green,
While through them all the winds were calling.

And all around her and above—
Dead symbols of a summer's love—
The autumn leaves were falling.

Whatever way she chose to take,
The woodland for her beauty's sake
Showed lovelier, and strove to make
 (While gentle winds were softly calling)
A picture that might well beseem
The vision of some Danae dream,
The gold about her falling.

At length, beside the Well she came,
And there with trembling heart aflame,
'Twix maiden love and maiden shame
 (The whispering winds around her calling)
She listen'd, till through lips apart
She heard the beating of her heart,
While autumn leaves were falling.

And waiting in that lonely place,
A trouble falls upon her face,
For evening shadows grow apace.
And murmuring winds are round her calling.
The hour is past ! why comes he not ?
Can love like summer be forgot
When autumn leaves are falling ?

Ah never I never I love abides
Through life and death, though all besides
Should perish in earth's shifting tides,
And restless winds for ever calling.
Love bears a life from May to May
Beyond the reach of earth's decay,
Though autumn leaves be falling.

"The way is long that he must ride,
The Tweed is running deep and wide
Where he must pass"—she will not chide
Though darkling winds are round her calling.
"Has he not waited many a night
For her, and watched the waning light
While autumn leaves were falling?"

Thus as she pleaded, through the wood
A horse sprang riderless, and stood
Splashed to the girths in foam and blood.
The shuddering winds about it calling:
With quivering flanks and face of pain
It shook a broken bridle rein
Where autumn leaves were falling.

She gazed until there seemed to rise
A blinding mist before her eyes,
While overhead, far up the skies,
She heard the winds of heaven calling,

Till sound and sight and all did seem
 To mix and melt into a dream
 Where autumn leaves were falling.

Where restless waters whirl and rave
 In foam around the Druid's Cave,
 They found him by the lonely wave,
 The moaning winds about him calling,—
 And her through morning light they trace
 To where upon her upturned face
 The autumn leaves are falling.

Beneath the quiet churchyard sod,
 Where shadowy beeches wave and nod
 To winds that are the breath of God,
 Through Life and Death for ever calling,
 Where all our loves and sorrows run,
 Their graves are lying in the sun,
 And autumn leaves are falling.



SELKIRK AFTER FLODDEN.

(A WIDOW'S DIRGE, OCTOBER, 1513.)

IT'S but a month the morn
Sin' a' was peace and plenty ;
Oor hairst was halflins shorn,
Eident men, and lasses denty.
But noo it's a' distress—
Never mair a merry meetin' ;
For half the bairns are faitherless,
And a' the women greetin'.
O Flodden Field !

Miles and miles round Selkirk toun,
Where forest flow'rs are fairest,
Ilka lassie's stricken doun,
Wi' the fate that fa's the sairest.
A' the lads they used to meet
By Ettrick braes or Yarrow
Lyn' thrammelt head and feet
In Brankstone's deadly barrow !
O Flodden Field !

Frae every cleuch and clan
 The best o' the braid Border
 Rose like a single man
 To meet the royal order.
 Oor Burgh toun itsel'
 Sent its seventy down the glen ;
 Ask Fletcher* how they fell,
 Bravely fechting, ane to ten !
 O Flodden Field !

Round about their gallant king,
 For countrie and for croon,
 Stude the dauntless Border ring,
 Till the last was hackit down.
 I blame na what has been—
 They maun fa' that canna flee—
 But oh, to see what I hae seen,
 To see what now I see !
 O Flodden Field !

The souters a' fu' croose,
 O'er their leather and their lingle,
 Wi' their shoon in ilka hoose,
 Sat contentit round the ingle.

* The name of the man who brought an English flag back to Selkirk from Flodden. Four brothers of that name are said to have perished in the battle.

Noo there's naething left but dool,—
Never mair their wark will cheer them ;
In Flodden's bluidy pool
They'll naether walt nor wear them !
O Flodden Field !

Whar the weavers used to meet,
In ilka bieldy corner,
Noo there's nane in a' the street
Savin' here and there a mourner,
Walkin' lanely as a wraith,
Or if she meet anither,
Just a word below their braith
O' some slauchtered son or brither !
O Flodden Field !

There stands the gudeman's loom
That used tae gang sae cheerie,
Untentit noo, and toom,
Makin' a' the hoose sae eerie,
Till the sicht I canna dree ;
For the shuttles lyin' dumb
Speak the loudlier to me
O' him that wunna come.
O Flodden Field !

Sae at nicht I cover't o'er,
Just tae haud it frae my een,
But I haena yet the pow'r
To forget what it has been ;
And I listen through the hoose
For the chappin' o' the lay,
Till the scrapin' o' a moose
Tak's my very braith away.
O Flodden Field !

Then I turn to sister Jean,
And my airms aboot her twine,
And I kiss her sleepless een,
For her heart's as sair as mine,—
A heart ance fu' o' fun,
And hands that ne'er were idle,
Wi' a' her cleedin' spun
Against her Jamie's bridal.
O Flodden Field !

Noo we've naether hands nor hairt—
In oor grief the wark's forgotten,
Tho' it's wantit every airt,
And the craps are lyin' rotten.

War's awesome blast's gane by,
And left a land forlorn;
In daith's dool hairst they lie,
The shearers an' the shorn.
O Flodden Field!

Wi' winter creepin' near us,
When the nichts are drear an' lang,
Nane to help us, nane to hear us,
On the weary gate we gang!
Lord o' the quick an' deed,
Sin' oor ain we canna see,
In mercy mak' gude speed,
And bring us whar they be,
Far, far, frae Flodden Field!



RETREAT IN YARROW.

DOBB'S LINN.

IN the green bosom of the sunny hills,
Far from the weary sound of human ills,
Where silence sleepeth,
Where nothing breaks the still and charmed hours,
Save whispering mountain stream that 'neath the flowers
For ever creepeth.

In the green bosom of the sunny hills,
There let me live ; where dewy freshness fills
The stainless sky,—
Where, out of very love, the mighty breeze
That wildly wanders over heaving seas
Lies down to die.

There let me live, there let me watch on high
Wild winter send adown the stormy sky
His howling crew.
Or when from heaven in the perfect time
Great summer sheddeth in her rosy prime
Joy-tears of dew.

My teachers are the hills ; no truth that feigns
A subtle wisdom drawn from weary brains
 With laboured care,
But nature's teaching, that from daisied sod
To lark-sung heights can find the love of God
 Plain written everywhere.

My God is in the hills ; and men have left
Earth's temples, when of house and home bereft
 In truth's despair,
To seek among the hills, in hunted bands,
God's higher temple never built with hands,
 And found it there.

Oh spirit of the everlasting Hills !
Whether the summer clothes or winter chills
 Thy holy brow !
Worshipping God for ever, while the breath
Of man dies out on meat that perisheth,
 How beautiful art thou !

The restless fevered wave of human life
Is echoing down the ages, but the strife
 Disturbs not thee,
Oh mountain ! sending up thy ceaseless prayer,
Fervently silent, through the charmed air
 Of heaven's blue sea.

Then back beside her work again,
She sings some old-world song to cheer her :
Some ballad, bitter-sweet with pain,
Of banished lover, fond and fain,—
Oh would, my heart, that I could hear her !

Fierce drifts the snow down Deuchar brae,
The winter wind behind it snarling,
O'er hill and valley, night and day :
It tells me of the weary way
That lies between me and my darling.

But plighted hearts are hard to break,
Though for a time they may be parted :
Though friends may fail and fortune shake,
We'll cling the closer for love's sake ;
So Peggie, never be down-hearted !

Sing on, sweetheart ! Misfortune's blast
Will sometimes make the prospect dreary ;
But fiercest storm is soonest past,—
The day's at hand when firm and fast
I'll clasp thee to my bosom, dearie !

SAINT MARY'S LAKE (YARROW).

PEACE on the Lake, and peace within my heart :
Each time I see thee gives a firmer hold
To that sweet influence that made thee part
Of my young life ; for now, when I am old,
The impress deepens with the gathering years,
Like some rich song, once heard, the soul for ever hears.

Did ever Love's eternal pathos fill
With fiercer fervour legends like to thine ?
And now, what silence reigns !—on every hill
No sound but bleating sheep or lowing kine ;
Or haply, when the summer noons afford,
The quiet air resounds with praises to the Lord. *

Music is holy—the holiest is the best ;
And thou hast been to me a quiet song,
A fount of melody within the breast
That would not mix its sacred source with wrong.
Ah, men forget the infinite debt they owe
To those undying mother-lights of long ago !

* The open-air service (the Blanket Sermon) is still an institution in the parish of Yarrow.

The flowers beside thy banks can I forget?—

The red-veined vetch, the tender-stemmed bluebell,
The fringed bog-bean, the purple violet,

The trailing stag-moss, golden asphodel?—
Those untamed races of the virgin sod,
That deck, untouched of man, the garden-ground of
God.

Nature becomes to him who loves her well

No casual visitor, he seldom sees,
But life's companion, come with him to dwell,

To soothe his sorrows, share his hours of ease :
A jealous lover she, that holds him fast,
In one life-long embrace, till life itself be past.

And so with thee, St. Mary's : thou hast been

No passing picture but a living scroll ;—
A memory of still waters, pastures green,
Feeding the lamp of God within the soul,
The sweet Sabbatic silence of thy hills—
I see them in my sleep, I hear their murmuring rills.

Through darkened days, in friendless solitude,

Such memories come like the returning dove,
Hope's olive-branch in life's despairing mood,
The soul's undying whisper, " God is Love,"
Till love has conquered ; for whate'er befall,
The heart must save us, else we are not saved at all.

Oh could the world but hear thy tranquil teaching,
 And in its disputations give less heed
 To those vain problems far beyond its reaching,
 That chase the troubled soul from creed to creed,
 When it might better rest its weary wings
 Beside God's holier temple of created things !

*A BORDER MAN CONVALESCENT
 IN LONDON.*

(Husband loquitur)

GIVE me your hand, my darling, and be near me.
 So, I've been ill, and raving too, they say ;
 I'm better and can speak now, sit and hear me—
 My head was clear when I awoke to-day.

How strange ! through all my fever I've been dreaming
 Of days when we were children, you and I,
 Romping in sun and wind, with faces beaming
 By those sea-pastures 'neath a northern sky.

It seemed so true, my soul must have been there,
Leaving behind this fevered frame of mine ;
I felt and saw things plainly, breathed sea air ;
And watched the light upon the far sea-line.

How they have haunted me, these dear retreats !
A thought, a flower, a sound, would set me free,
Beyond the reek and roar of London streets,
To those sweet silent pastures by the sea.

(Wife loquitur)

There I there I you must not talk. The dear old places,
So full of memories for you and me,
We'll see again—the old, the kindly faces,
And wander in the fields beside the sea.

(Husband loquitur)

How is it, growing old, that what we've seen
In earliest days should cling to memory yet,
When all the interval of life between,
Compared to *that*, seems easy to forget ?

How life in which we've fought, and fagged, and striven
Looked back upon, should be but empty noise ;
While far behind it, like the hills of heaven,
Stand out the days when we were girls and boys ?

Happy the life whose youth was in the sun,
And kept from canker in the budding tree ;
I thank my God that ours was so begun
On those dear sunny fields beside the sea.

Our hopes are but our memories reversed :
'Twere heaven enough, dear heart, for you and me
To live again the life we once rehearsed
In those bright stainless fields beside the sea.

Well ! well ! I will be quiet,—calm your fears,
A sick man with his nurse must needs agree ;
Good-night, my darling, kiss me—What ? In tears ?
You too have loved the fields beside the sea.

ALBEMARLE ST.



Love Poems

(LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC).

“A Crowd is not Company ; And Faces are but
a Gallery of Pictures ; And Talke but a Tinckling
Cymball, where there is no Love.”—BACON.



HER BEAUTY.

BEAUTIFUL? Nay, beauty's self!

What with her can I compare?
Not all the light on Hebe's cheek,
Or Daphne's golden hair:
Her beauty so surpasses aught
That poet-lover ever thought.

Eyes that open slowly wide,
Largely lit with tender blue;
Careless of the world beside,
Eyes that read me through—
Striking deep divinest chords
Of most unutterable words.

Eyes that have a richer flow
Of richer words than words can tell:
Would that it were ever so—

Words might break the spell ;
Eloquence that speaketh thus
Maketh speech ridiculous.

But lo ! her voice ! my heart stands still,
All life's leading pulses stop
That hungry love may drink his fill,
And never lose a drop.
Oh ! I could sit by such a door
And watch the steps for evermore.

Voice that haunts me like a psalm
When the singers every one,
Ceasing, leave the soul behind
Though the song be done ;
A chant in some cathedral pile
That wreathes about the fretted aisle.

BOWHILL.

•

LOVE'S EXPOSITORS.

How is it that in all the earth,
All that is beautiful in birth
Or being, seems a part of her

The waters seem to lisp her name,
Winds whisper it, and all things claim
To be my love's interpreter.

The birds all sing of it. The flowers
Must know these secret thoughts of ours.
The very air seems laden so
With music of unburdened speech,
That lies for ever out of reach,
Yet follows me where'er I go.

Singing, she passed me in the wood
But yesterday; unseen I stood,
And all things stood to see her pass.
The wild-flowers laughed beneath her tread;
I thought the very earth was glad
To have her shadow on the grass.

Birds followed her, and all things bent
The way her blessed footsteps went,
And watched her to the very last.
The wind sank down and only sighed,
And eager daisies, open-eyed,
Stared after her until she passed.

A SUMMER SONG.

SITTING on the breezy height
Of the topmost bough,
Bird ! O bird ! my bonnie bird,
What singest thou ?
What the secret of thy heart,
Tell me, bird, now ?

I have come thy woods among,
All alone here,
Just to give my heart a tongue
Without stint or fear,—
Come to sing my soul out,
Bird, where none may hear.

My song is love, is love, is love !
Bird, what is thine ?
A whisper falls, O bonnie bird,
Down the sweet sunshine,
That softly tells me word for word
Thy song is mine.

O bird, but love is sweet, sweet,
Sweet for me and you,
So sweet that I could sit and sing
A song for ever new,—
Could sit beside thee, bonnie bird,
The whole day through.

THE HAINING, BEECH-HILL WOOD.

ENDYMION.

LAST night, on Latmos as I stood alone,
With eyes uplifted on the jewelled height
Of holy heaven, the golden dream came on—
The dream that dims the sight.

But opens other eyes, past life's extreme,
On regions where the soul can rise unbound
To those strange heights where earth becomes a dream,
And dreams are solid ground.

My soul was led into a silent land
Of shadowy-thoughted beauty, still and sweet—
Led ever onward by an unseen hand
That brought me to her feet.

I knew she stood beside me, though my eyes
To earthly things were blinded everywhere ;
I knew when sight came back, without surprise
That I should see her there.

She spoke, and ere I knew my dream had grown
To gorgeous melting masses, like the clouds
That veil Olympus when the day lies down
In gold and purple shrouds.

Through gulfs of misty music darkness fled
In broken waves that tumbled into space :
A moon-like dawn struck upward overhead—
And we were face to face.

Assuredly, unless the gods had sworn
To help man's weakness, sending from above
A more than mortal strength, I had not borne
That rapture of her love.

But suddenly my nature knew a change—
A subtle change. I drank at every breath
The ether of a life all new and strange
Beyond the grasp of death.

Beneath her eyes asunder broke the bars,
My soul was lifted up, as from deep caves
The climbing ocean clutches at the stars
 With hungry heaving waves.

From deeper depths than earthly bliss can know,
I felt my life drawn upward like a flame,
When, bending over me to kiss my brow,
 She called me by my name.

“Endymion! I am here! Arise! Rejoice!”
Ah then, the outstretched heavens, and this we call
The earth, to me were empty, and her voice
 Was ringing through them all!

Hear me, ye gods! while yet I offer up
Another prayer for that hour; for I—
Since I have tasted the immortal cup—
 Must drink again or die.

Oh gather up thy golden reins, and lash
The hours to moments through the startled sky,
Great Helios! Strike till all thy team shall flash
 From maddened hoof to eye—

REFLECTION.

WITHIN my lady's eyes I find the whole
Of love's sweet moods reflected perfectly.
The rapturous rest, the deep felicity,
That silent sweet serenity of soul
Love only knows when it has reached its goal,
With nothing left to think of, hear, or see,
That does not answer to the master-key,
Nor falls within love's golden aureole.

Could anything that heaven itself could give her
Make those still eyes of hers more heavenly fair?
Lo! as I look at them, like summer air
That wakens into flame a sleeping river,
Laughter has taken them with light so rare
It would content me well to look for ever.



A RELIC.

ONLY a woman's right-hand glove,
Six and three-quarters, Courvoisier's make—
For all common purposes useless enough,
Yet dearer for her sweet sake.

Dearer to me for her who filled
Its empty place with a warm white hand—
The hand I have held ere her voice was stilled
In the sleep of the silent land,

Only a glove ! yet speaking to me
Of the dear dead days now vanished and fled,
And the face that I never again shall see
Till the grave give back its dead.

An empty glove ! yet to me how full
Of the fragrance of days that come no more,
Of memories that make us, and thoughts that rule
Man's life in its inmost core.

The tone of her voice, the pose of her head—
All, all come back at the will's behest ;
The music she loved, the books that she read—
Nay the colours that suited her best.

And on ! that night by the wild sea shore,
With its tears, and its kisses, and vows of love,
When as pledge of the parting promise we swore
Each gave a glove for a glove.

You laugh ! but remember though only a glove,
And to you may no deeper a meaning express,
To me it is changed by the light of that love
To the one sweet thing I possess !

Our souls draw their nurture from many a ground ;
And faiths that are different in their roots,
Where the will is right and the heart is sound,
Are much the same in their fruits.

Men get at the truth by different roads,
And must live for the part of it each one sees ;
You gather your guides out of orthodox codes,
I mine out of trifles like these.

A trifle, no doubt ; but in such a case,
So bathed in the light of a life gone by,
It has entered the region and takes its place
With the things that cannot die !

This trifle to me is of heavenly birth ;
No chance, as I take it, but purposely given
To help me to sit somewhat looser to earth,
And closer a little to heaven.

For it seems to bring me so near,—oh so near
To the face of an angel watching above—
That face of all others I held so dear,
With its yearning eyes of love !

“TILL DEATH DO US PART.”

IN every Love-treaty, Death goes to the reckoning ;
And now he is closing on yours and mine ;
We have battled him bravely from line to line,
Till at last he is with us, his lean hand beckoning.

Nearer and nearer his shadow is blackening,
Slowly effacing our life's design ;
In every Love-treaty, Death goes to the reckoning,
And now he is closing on yours and mine.

O love ! though my hand on the helm be slackening,
And a heart from a heart is hard to untwine,
Our dark night of sorrow brings brighter awakening ;
The conqueror carries a message divine,
Of a treaty where Death has no part in the reckoning,
And Love evermore shall be yours and mine.

WHEN LOVE AND I WERE YOUNG.

" Ces beaux jours, quand j'étais si malheureuse."

OH starry nights and golden days I
Oh wondrous land of wild amaze I
Through which life's echoes rung ;
Fierce fervours filled the earth and sky,
We knew not whence, we cared not why,
When Love and I were young.

But this we knew, the time was blest,
That sweet was waking, sweet was rest,
That earth's fair blossoms flung
A dreamy fragrance through the land
Where we two wandered, hand in hand,
When Love and I were young.

And all the wondrous world was new,
And faith was strong, and love was true,
Unskilled in heart and tongue ;
Untaught of wrong in any wise,
The heart lay open in the eyes,
When Love and I were young.

Let caution shake her callous head
When all her weary rules are read,
And moral maxims rung !
The wine of life, its tears, its mirth,
Were glorious vintages of earth,
When Love and I were young.

I council not to any wrong ;
In every life there's joy and song,
If it be rightly sung ;
Beshrew the blockhead that would teach
That all is wrong within the reach,
When Life and Love are young,

The carping world may preach and cry,
I care not how they buzz and lie,
 The stinging and the stung ;
I hold their wisdom and their ways
As hollow yet as in the days
 When Love and I were young,

Let art and commerce, church and state,
All that the world holds good and great,
 Have each their praises sung ;
I'll swear, denounce it as you please,
That life was holier than these
 When Love and I were young.

Good-bye ! good-bye ! they fade and die ;
Out of the past I hear the cry,
 The hearts to mine that clung !
If all anathemas were hurled,
I'd take their hand against the world,
 If Love and I were young.



LOVE'S FLAME.

COME, Shepherd, now my lute's in tune,

What would you I should sing or play?

Some measure laden sweet as June

With langorous odours? Tell me, pray.

Some air to trickle through your soul,

Like dewdrops in the rose's bowl?

No! say'st thou so?

Ah then, loves tender flame,

Perhaps thou hast not known, except in name.

At gloaming by that pleasant rill

Which murmurs to the murmuring shore,

Hast never waited on the hill

Beneath the spreading sycamore,

And, listening for her coming feet,

Heard through thy lips thine own heart beat?

No! say'st thou so?

Ah then, love's quivering flame,

Thou has not known it, Shepherd, but in name!

Hast never met by ford or field

That maiden, fresh and free from blame,
Beneath whose gaze thy pulses reeled

With sense of unaccustomed shame?
And when to speak you would have come,
Found suddenly that you were dumb!

No! say'st thou so?
Ah then, love's conquering flame
Thou hast not known as yet, except in name!

Say, hast thou never heard a voice

That seemed to you so strange and new,
It made all other sounds but noise

Compared to that you listened to?
As if it held in every breath
The issues of your life or death?

No! say'st thou so?
Ah then, love's piercing flame,
Thou never canst have known it but in name.

Shepheru, adieu! my song is done!

Go to thy bacon and thy beans;
Why should I sing or play to one
Who does not know what Music means?

'Tis love's own language, and as yet
You do not know your alphabet ;
 No ! Shepherd, no !
To you, love's tender flame
Has never been revealed, except in name !

PRITHEE, MADAM.

PRITHEE, madam, what are you,
 That you accept with scorning
Love that is honourable, true,
 And constant, night and morning,
Exacting it as beauty's due ?

Beauty lures, but love must bind ;
 And beauty's long unkindness,
Although that love were ten times blind,
 Cures him of his blindness—
Gives him back his lucid mind.

Though love, it seems, less pleases you
Than admiration endless,
You'll find in such a retinue
Much that is cold and friendless,
Flatterers many, lovers few.

With these I neither sigh nor weep,
I only give you warning,
That for the future you must keep
For some one else your scorning ;
I'm sick of it. Good-morning !

LOVE'S EXCHANGES.

YOU praise my beauty, grace and art,
O Love ; but you are much to blame ;
In every line you leave a smart,
That makes me bow my head in shame.

Whate'er the world may choose to say,
I look not for such words from you ;
I'd throw them from my heart away,
If you could even prove them true.

World's praise is but a passing mood,
That shifts about with the occasion ;
It serves as oft for envy's food,
As that of honest admiration.

In your regard, I set no store
On what, by way of form or feature,
I hold in common, less or more,
With every other human creature.

If Love be blind, as it is said,
What can he know of outward graces ?
I care not for the love that's led
A facile slave of pretty faces.

I would not have my love depend
On beauty, were I ten times fairer.
If beauty knew no change or end,
Life asks for something deeper, rarer—

Something that sets the world aside,
Beyond the touch of time or season.
If only love for love abide,
I do not want another reason.

PROMISES.

RAEBURN'S MEADOW,
3d October, Monday, midnight.

I.

Clara, Dear,

I can think I see you sitting, half in wonder, half in
fear,

With this letter I am writing, in your hand,
Wondering what should make me write in the middle
of the night,

And you guess and guess, and cannot understand.

II.

And I will leave you guessing, dearest. till you guess it
out

What mightily important news I have to speak about,

That at this unearthly season I should write ;

Why I should find no better time to write my friend a
letter

Than just close upon the middle of the night.

III.

Ah ! before I say another word, I can feel you guess it
now,
I can see the sudden thought that lifts a finger to your
brow,
And kindles your sweet face with quick surprise :
Yes ! darling, your good guessing has just saved me
from confessing :
I can see the truth just dawning in your eyes.

IV.

You remember of our promise to each other, Clara
mine,
When we came from school together, in the spring of
sixty-nine
(Oh that dreary Milburn Junction, where we parted,
Where the heartless shrieking train bore you off in wind
and rain,
And left me on the platform broken-hearted).

V.

Our written vow that should be sacred, and in sacred
honour kept,
That we should tell our plighted hour, should tell
"before we slept"

(These the words, for I remember every line) ;
And now you know the reason why I write at such a
season :
You kept your promise, darling ; I keep mine.

VI.

His name I need not tell you—you foretold it once
before,
Just a year since. You remember of that walk upon
the shore,
When on horseback he accosted you and me,
When with faultless intuition, you then whispered your
suspicion.
You were right, though I said nothing—it is he.

VII.

It is he. (Oh, yet the thought will haunt me, even in
my bliss,
Had God but ruled the issue to another end than this,
Had his love upon another been to fall ;
Oh to whom such fate is given, thou dear God send
down from heaven
Thine own comfort, for His sake that loved us all.)

VIII.

Well, to-day his younger brother, Alexander, came
of age,
So at night they held a monster gathering down at
Fernitytage,
Where, of course, *he* was dispenser of the cheer,
With his way so frank and hearty, life and soul of all
the party,
Looking handsomer than ever, Clara, dear.

IX.

We had been dancing full an hour, when I, to have a
rest,
Took advantage of the Lancers going on (which I
detest),
When he came and stood beside me near the door—
Asked if I would dance the next in a voice that seemed
perplexed,
And a manner I had never seen before.

X.

Well, we hardly had begun (it was a waltz: your
aunt was playing)
When he *asked me*! I pretended not to know what
he was saying,

For the noise just at the time was running high,
And you know how aunty jingles out that glorious
waltz of Gung'l's :
Oh, that tune will haunt me, Clara, till I die.

XI.

For with slow deliberate whisper he repeated it again,
Till he knew that I had heard him and escape was all
in vain ;
Oh, I thought that every moment I would fall ;
And I felt that had I spoken but one word I should
have broken
Into tears, and stood confessed before them all.

XII.

And as we danced along I hardly knew where I was
going, —
I seemed to hear the music of another world flowing
To the feet of shadows flitting to and fro ;
And, far out of earthly reaching, seemed to hear a
voice beseeching,
Through the echo of a name that I should know.

XIII.

Till at length, with senses reeling, past the power of
thought or feeling,
Hearing ever but the accents of a passionate appealing,
I entreated him that he would let me go ;
But with firmer voice than ever he only whispered
"Never,
Till you answer me that question—Yes or No?"

XIV.

At that moment any other word than "Yes" I could
have spoken,
Though what I said I know not—something meaningless
and broken ;
Yet all at once he ceased to ask me more,
And I heard through noise and whirling only "Thank
you, thank you, darling,"
When suddenly he stopped just at the door.

XV.

I was up-stairs in a moment, where I locked the door
behind me ;
Oh, relief to be alone at last, where nobody could find
me,—

To be again secure from every eye ;
I could keep my heart no more, so sat down just on the
floor,
And I hardly need to tell you, had a cry.

XVI.

Of course I never dreamt of going down again to dance,
So put on my shawl and bonnet, waiting till I had a
chance
Of slipping down when nobody was there,
When I found, to my amazement, he was sitting in the
casement,
Waiting for me at the window in the stair,—

XVII.

Waiting for me coat-and-hatted, so I could not choose
but go,
And in walking home together—well—I did not answer
“ No ” ;
O Clara, dearest Clara, how I love him !
I could lie in death's embrace leaning over that dear
face,
And shed my very soul in tears above him.

TIME.

I. PRESTO.

WHEN we two meet, Time flies,
Hours shrink to half their size ;
Fast as an eagle's flight
They pass into the night,
Soon lost in darkening skies.

Could we but close Time's eyes,
Or coax the crabbed wight
To turn away his sight
When we two meet !

Alas ! to all our cries
He never once replies ;
And yet in his despite
Love can assert its might :
Time's power to harm us dies
When we two meet.

II. LARGO.

When you are gone, Time creeps,
Until he all but sleeps,
 Lets drop his drowsy head
 Like one on poppies fed ;
Yes, Time that bounds and leaps

When you are here, scarce keeps
His feet in motion, weeps
 Because his feet are lead,
 When you are gone.

His lazy sickle sweeps
Life's fragrance into heaps
 Of flowers whose bloom is shed.
 His ways are sick and dead ;
I care not what he reaps
 When you are gone.



LOVE IS ENOUGH.

OH, come away from earthly noise ;
What are all its shallow joys
When love has lit the heart ?—the light that renders
Earth's best gifts but tinsel splendours,
And all her prizes but the toys
Of full-grown children. Unto you and me
Love, love alone is the reality—
All beside but empty roar,
The barren billows of a bellowing sea
Breaking for ever on a heedless shore—
Mere noise ; no more, no more.

Then come away and let it be ;
Love is enough for you and me.
Yea, though the world's foundations rock
And stagger to the final shock,
And earth be swallowed in the sea ;
Though Nature's laws should break their trust,
And bring the worlds to primal dust—
If only love be left—as so it must—
It is enough for you and me.

Love that lifts us, love that dowers
With purer riches higher powers !
That purges vision to the starry sight
Of things immortal ! love that showers
Upon the poorest life a grander light
Than bathes this earth of ours.

Oh, to be thus for evermore !
With her head upon my breast,
My little bird in her chosen nest
Of circling arms, at rest, at rest ;
Forgetting all we have possess,
Learning alone love's lore ;
To hold for ever in embrace
The speechless beauty of her face ;
Ever striving to divine
The heavenly things her eyes are saying,
Looking into mine.

Those eyes of hers, that are to me
My arguments for immortality ;
For what but something gifted, something crowned
With godlike motive and eternal years,
Could fill, without a word, without a sound,
To shaking fulness Love's immortal cup

With language that the spirit only hears—
 Bringing its speechless treasures up
From those unfathomable spheres
That lie far down beneath the source of tears.

I SAT WITH HER HAND IN MINE.

I SAT with her hand in mine,
 Last night when the sun went down ;
Our hearts were full of love's light divine,
 The light of life and the crown ;
My soul spoke only to hers,
 And the listening heavens above,
While up through her eyes for ever
Answered the speechless river
 Of her love.

No word between us arose—
 Wherefore at all the need ?
For what are words to the heart that knows
 It loves, and is loved indeed ?

But I swear in my heart for her,
To the listening heavens above,
While up through her eyes for ever
Answered the speechless river
Of her love.

ELECTIVE AFFINITY.

ONCE, only once, he bent him low,
And gazed in mine eyes—oh bliss !
To feel the fainting overflow
Of my soul falling into his,
Silent as falling snow.

His voice most tremulously touches
My very furthest verge of mind ;
And in his aspect something vouches
Every utterance ; for behind
His eye the spirit couches.

His speech like music chaineth me,
His words are not as other words.
Oh blissfully ! oh peacefully !
They fall into my heart like white-winged birds
That light upon the sea.

And from his lips' most careless flow
A breath as if from heaven doth sweep
Across my soul, as from below
Great gulfs of harmony molten-deep,
A voice doth come and go.

His thoughts unconsciously awaketh
Strange newly-born affinities
Between my thought and his, and maketh
A perfect unity of bliss,
Till life within me shaketh.

High-reaching thoughts, a flaming scroll
Of living words, that gleam and flash
Far up to reason's ultimate pole,
Till in my blood I hear the clash
Of his imperial soul !

Once, only once, he bent him low,
And gazed in mine eyes—oh bliss !
To feel the fainting overflow
Of my soul falling into his,
Silent as falling snow.

CAROLINE.

I.

YES, that whisper you let fall
In a flash revealed it all ;
But your hint I must respectfully decline—
For I still accept that “ No ”
That you gave me years ago,
As a final overthrow,

Caroline.

II.

But your secret, never fear,
I shall keep it, Carry dear.
If 'twere only for the sake of “ Auld Langsyne ”;
I could never now abuse it,
Only, if I should refuse it,
I'm afraid you must excuse it,

Caroline.

III.

But you're sure to find, dear Carry,
Some one else that you can marry,
With a temper more compatible than mine ;
You're superb in that pale pearl,
And you're yet a pretty girl
When your hair is well in curl,

Caroline.

IV.

With that exquisite soprano,
And your touch on the piano,
Not to mention other talents, quite as fine,
Your success should be complete ;
Then those eyes, when they entreat,
Might bring emp'ors to your feet,

Caroline.

V.

But you must not hope to see
Further worship now from me,
For I cannot kneel again at the old shrine ;
Though the temple, I concede,
Is still very fine indeed,
I have somewhat changed my creed,

Caroline.

VI.

Things are not with you and me
What they were at twenty-three ;
I'm now thirty (*entre nous*, you're twenty-nine);
Youth is rash, and blind, and bolder,
And you know as hearts grow older
Life is slower, blood is colder,

Caroline.

VII.

Then, again, folk's views will alter ;
Now the matrimonial halter
Looks to me, if not more earthly, less divine :
Things look hardly quite so rosy ;
Do you know I'm dropping poesy ?
And—fact is, I'm getting prosy,

Caroline.

VIII.

You think *now* I'll do you credit :
Tell me, has some gossip said it ?
Or has the thought in any part been thine ?
I am curious to know
To whose offices I owe
The good word that's changed you so,

Caroline.

IX.

I can't think what it can be
That has brought you back to me,—
I should like to hear the reasons you assign;
But we need not now debate
What can ne'er affect our fate,
For the change comes now too late,
Caroline.

X.

Yes, too late. Love's not a flower
One can grow at any hour
(At any rate it is not so with mine);
And when, reared with careful pain,
It is killed with wind and rain,
It will hardly come again,
Caroline.

XI.

Ah! the ghostly past, you see,
Raises up 'twixt you and me
A vague something that mere words will not define;
I can see through closed lids
Something standing that forbids
(Hearts have eyes as well as heads),
Caroline.

XII.

But, away with vain regret,
You, I know, will soon forget ;
As for me, about past days I can't repine ;
Though they touched a tender string,
I was honest, and they bring
Not the vestige of a sting,

Caroline.

XIII.

But, dear Carry, have a care
In your next *petite affaire*,
For this little imp of Love we call divine ;
This little high and mighty
Wayward whelp of Aphrodite
Will sometimes turn and bite ye,

Caroline.



A FAREWELL PROPOSAL.

Farewell? but stay! if words say what they mean,
The spirit of this word defeats the letter;
For if 'twere not to say, 'tis plainly seen
There's many a heart would doubtlessly fare better.

It stands confessed, recorded in love's lore,
Divided love's an undivided curse;
Let sighs and tears attest the wide world o'er
That hearts compelled to say farewell, fare worse.

Farewell! 'tis but a phrase of mortal birth;
Heaven could not be where such a sound was heard.
Tell me, dear heart, shall we bring heaven to earth,
And say farewell for ever to the word?

AFTER THE HOLIDAY.

WHAT shall I do for the wrong I have done her?
Why did she hide her heart so long,
And never gave warning or word I had won her,
Till reading together that farewell song?

Oh, would that of parting we never had spoken;
She might have forgot it, and all been well,
And the passion-cloud passed overhead unbroken—
But how could I hinder it? How could I tell?

How could I know what her heart was concealing?
She laughed at love-making the whole day long:
With never a hint of more serious feeling,
How could I know I was doing her wrong?

Was she cheating herself with her own delusion
Right up to that moment when reading alone?
To her maidenly shame and my utter confusion,
The tear-gates burst and the mask was thrown.

Then what could I do with her head on my shoulder,
Her great grey eyes looking up into mine ?
Oh, what was I thinking of not to have told her ?—
Yet how to have done so ? She made no sign.

I thought she was jesting, as I was doing ;
That our walks and our talks and our readings in rhyme,
Our stately politeness, and pastoral wooing,
Were only employments for holiday time.

Oh, heart of a woman ! for who can sound it ?
How hard but to touch it, even in play.
And leave it exactly the same as you found it,
Without something added or taken away.

To think that an unforeseen trifle like this
Should hamper a soul in a serious sense,
Propounding a question for bale or for bliss,
So full of a deathless consequence.

Is Love only Fate with a different name ?
'Twere better to know it before we begin,
Than suddenly find that the carefulest game
Is out of our hands when the heart comes in.

The act of a moment ! a word ! a touch !—
Too kindly a look in the eyes—may be
Just a scruple put into the scales too much
And the balance is struck in eternity !

A DEBT OF HONOUR.

STAND back ! and let me forward there ;
Stand back, I say ! I cannot brook
The salaried stranger's well-meant prayer,
And hackneyed phrases from the book,

Across the corpse of him I loved ;
Stand back, and keep official grief
For those who need it, or approv't ;—
To me it cannot give relief.

One little moment I will crave,
One little moment let me speak ;
I cannot stand beside his grave
In silence, or my heart will break.

Forgive me if I seem to take
Your priestly office thus away ;
The sole excuse that I can make—
I have the larger debt to pay.

He stood beside me in my need,
A tested friend when friendship breaks,—
The test that shakes the Christless creed,
Forsaking what the world forsakes.

'Tis right that I should tell, who know
What few could know or understand,
How great he was when here below,
Who now sits down at God's right hand.

For his was not the good that turns
Its grandest side to earthly eyes—
Rather the steady flame that burns
Within the secret sanctuaries.

No, friend, you could not know him much ;
You judged him right, his views were broad ;
He shunned the shackles—would not touch
What circumscribed the Church of God.

You did not see the heart that yearned
Beyond the limits of your creed,
But half suspected, half discerned,
The sowing of the holier seed.

The fire that leaps from heart to heart
In silent lightnings flashed abroad,
That worketh not by clerkly art,
But soweth on the winds of God.

'Tis true, you could not well be friends
In higher matters, you and he ;
Too blind, perhaps, to present ends,
He failed to see what you could see.

He valued less those kinds of truth
Creed-guarded, labelled well, and priced ;
Trade-marked, and paid for ; no, in sooth,
He had not so conceived of Christ.

But where in wretchedness it lay,
Struck dumb with lips and eyes aghast,
His goodness gave him right of way
Where you, friend priest, have seldom passed.

Yes, Truth has many a carpet-knight—
The wordy warrior in dispute
May well look here on him whose fight
Was hand to hand, and foot to foot.

Who stormed a citadel of lies,
Who cut his way through privileged wrong
With that sublime self-sacrifice
Of his, as pure as it was strong.

Who, ready at the highest call,
Rushed madly on opposing spears,
And died upon the breaking wall,
The victor's triumph in his ears,—

The victor's shout, the victor's frown ;
And yet I know, when this man fell,
Truth shuddered, and a peal ran down
Of laughter terrible in hell !

Sleep on, brave heart ! Thy soul has fled
Where earthly arrow may not reach :
When angels come to claim the dead,
They'll find thy body in the breach.

GOOD-BYE.

WE stood together while the bell was ringing,
There in the busy station by the sea ;
Near us, a soldier's wife in tears was clinging
Close to her husband's side. No word said we,
But looking both away, our own eyes met :
A quick confusion took me, and a blush
Went up her lovely eyes and face, but yet
No word was spoken, till there came a rush
Of hurrying feet, and in the buzz and crush
I held her hand a moment ; I forget
What then was said, for speaking was cut short
By first the engine's whistle, then a snort—
'Twas off ! O Lord, what trifles, more or less,
Can block a lifelong contract, No, or Yes !



TO NEÆRA

(OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.)

GOOD-BYE, my love that was—my love that is,
If love could live on earthly food alone,
When all the starry wonder that is his
Is faded out and gone ;
For you his robes of light are worn away,
A common creature now, made of the common clay.

The word, the gesture, the unconscious touch,
That love with such a meaning could endow,
The little kindnesses that meant so much—
All, all are vanished now ;
The haggard present, like a mocking fiend,
Points at the past, and cries, "For you the fruit is
gleaned."

Stand still, and let me see once more the eyes
That broke upon me like the dawn of day,
The glorious creature, clad in angel's guise,
That stole my heart away ;

The face that once looked fondly into mine,
And set my clinging soul ablaze with love's new wine.

Oh, was I robbed alike of sense and sight,
 These months, when every trifle gave a theme
To keep love's altar burning day and night ;
 Or was it all a dream ?
Can that which once was true be true no more ;
Or was it but truth's mask some evil demon wore ?

Those summer rambles with a favourite book,
 The music that made love an open scroll,
Those swift interpretations of a look
 That flashed from soul to soul ;
Those rapturous encounters of the mind,
When thought leaps up to thought, and leaves the word
 behind.

But wherefore speak ? Let's break the unholy ban,
 Since thou hast torn away the sacred root,
Which makes the difference 'twixt the heart of man
 And instinct of the brute :
Since love's most hallowed portion may not be,
Give whom you will the rest,—Good-bye, 'tis not
 for me.

A FAREWELL.

FAREWELL ! yet not for ever ! When at last
The world has worn its weary servant out,
A bait no longer worth its while to cast
Across the seething rout,
Come back to me. Though all the world should flout,
Come back ! and I will help thee with thy load.
The saddening years may yield the better thought,
And tears for thy first love bring back thy heart to God.



LOVE QUESTIONINGS.

A SONG. *

ASK me no more, for Love can never show
A reason why her heart should come or go :
That mine doth beat for thee is all I know—
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more, dear heart—Love reasons none ;
Nay, Reason's self, beneath Love's mightier sun,
Abandons all her reasons, one by one—
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more ; but say, if we could know
Whence all Love's secret subtle sources flow—
Answer me, sweet, would Love be sweeter so ? —
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more ; like flowers beneath the sod
That wait for summer, Love in its abode
Beyond our utmost will is moved of God—
Ask me no more.

* After Thomas Carew, 1580-1639.

LOVE'S FETTERS.

How can you go? What once you gave to me,
How can you give to others? No, love, no!
Ask at your heart if such a thing can be—
You cannot go!

Where would you go? Is there another hand
Could help you, comfort you, or soothe you so—
Stand by you with more faith than I can stand?
Where would you go?

Think ere you go! Should sickness fall on thee—
If, when the lamp of life is burning low,
Too late, O love, your heart should call for me,
Think ere you go.

'Twere wrong to go. Look at the lowered life!
Your past will haunt you, taunt you, like a foe,
And fill your heart with daily fret and strife—
You should not go.

Why would you go? Remember your first vow,
Close by the door there, love's first overflow !
Your head upon my shoulder, you know how.
You must not go.

Say, would you go? Can you, while life endures,
Forget that hour when passion-pale as snow,
Through love's first tears you whispered "I am yours."
Say, would you go?

You could not go ! Reft of the sacred store
Which life and love have taken years to grow,
Our world were worse than blank. No more, no more !
You shall not go !

LOVE'S REJOINDER.

"There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned."

WHY do I love you? Why do rivers run?
Why does the north wind rage, the south wind sigh?
Why loves the earth to bask beneath the sun?
These follow but their nature, so do I.

How do the flowers love—every flower its season?
Why loves the far-off hill its opal mist?
The birds sing out their love, but give no reason—
It is enough for these that they exist.

As comes in spring the murmur of the dove,
As song of lark that cleaves the summer sky,
My heart so sings, so clings to thee, my love,
And I can give no better reason why.

It is not for your beauty, nor for pleasure,
Your matchless form, nor yet your balanced mind;
For each of these is but an earthly measure
For that which leaves earth's measures all behind.

Love, life, and death are of the things that come
Without our will, our effort, or our art;
In their unbidden presence man is dumb,
For these are masters never man could thwart.

What do we know of love?—its why, or whence?
We only know it flashes from the gloom
Of things outside our sanction or our sense;
And when it does we stand beside our doom.

Under the rich man's roof, or poor man's rafter,
When love has entered in, for ill or well,
That moment stamps itself on man's hereafter,
Whatever name he gives it—heaven or hell.

For though it cannot be but love's first seed
Should fall on earthly soil, and earth must handsel it,
Transplanted into man's immortal creed,
Time may defy eternity to cancel it.

And though love lies concealed in blinding light
That baffles reason, mocks the poet's prayer
For power to tell its infinite depth and height.
Content, we still can breathe its blessed air.

Let it suffice for you and me, that each
Heart knows its secret, loves it not less well,
Because it lies too deep, too dear for speech—
It would be less than love if we could tell.



BEAUTY THOU HAST.

BEAUTY thou hast, but what is that to me
More than to all the world, who are awake
To beauty's power, and glad for beauty's sake?
Since every creature that has sight to see
Must lift enchanted eyes to such as thee.
As long as light shall play and pass and break
Across God-fashioned faces, yours must take
The world along with it, where'er it be.

Yet, when I hear them praising to the skies
Your marble throat, your bronze abundant hair,
Your lips, your brow, the light within your eyes!
Their words pass by me like the idle air.
What is the glory of the outward wall,
Beside the dear kind heart behind it all?



WHEN I AM DEAD.

WHEN I am dead, and all my heart's distress
Lies in the sweet earth's green forgetfulness,
I care not, love, if all the world go by
My quiet grave without a word or sigh,
If thou but think of me with gentleness.

World's praise or blame is nothing, hit or miss :
Love is alone the measure of our bliss,
And safe within love's heart my name will lie
When I am dead.

To thee, my darling, all will seem amiss,
Till gentle time shall help thee to dismiss
Death's gloom ; for that, too, has its time to die,
And sorrow's thought grows hallowed by-and-bye.
Take courage, then, dear suffering heart: Read this
When I am dead.

Marah.

“That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

“That which brings darkness into our ranks, also gives us glimmerings of the stars.”—VICTOR HUGO.



MARAH.

WHEN Miriam's timbrels struck the chords of faith
And all the joyous world was glad with her,
I gathered up my grief without demur.
I would not be the heart that hindereth
The happy world by one unhappy breath,
So took my way into that land of Shur,
Where every well that man may touch or stir
Is bitter with the bitterness of death.

Footsore by day—in dreams by night—I trod
That dewless desert. In its treacherous calms
Death shadows fell upon me, deep and broad,
Till, struggling on, I reached the golden palms
Of Elim. Singing there, some men of God
Bound up my bleeding feet and gave me alms.

SECOND-SIGHT.

THERE cometh a time in the life of man
When earth's realities strike him less,
When the facts of the senses seem nothing, and when
The matters that move him beyond his ken
Are the only things that impress.

Some sorrow perhaps has searched him through,
And burned away in its cleansing fires
Life's baser belongings, and kindled anew
Those higher life-lights that strike out of view
The earth and its low desires.

When life but lives for its holier sake,
The lamp in a temple where no voice sings
But in prayer and praise ; those wings that make
That wafting about us, which keeps us awake
To the sense of invisible things.

A time when a man in the world's keen eyes
Seems fallen behind on the busy road,—
Seems making a senseless sacrifice ;
And yet he knows that his heart is wise
In the sight of the searching God.

The world's weak wisdom has taken flight ;
Things earthly near him, and heavenly far,
Are suddenly seen in an equal light,
And divested of argument, dumb in his sight,
Stand out for what they are.

Slink out of his way, ye vendors of lies ;
By a light not yours he can read you through,
Oh hollow of heart ! and oh worldly wise !
The things you would carefully screen from his eyes
Are the things that are thrust on his view.

And to you, O soul, where the vision is shown,
It may come but once in your earthly strife ;
Mark well what it says to you, make it your own,
Beat it out into prayer, ere the angel has flown,
And gird it about your life.

FORSAKEN.

WE built our nest in the sun,
Where the sweet west winds were blowing,
We counted our nestlings every one,—
What wonder glad tears would sometimes run?
We could not help their flowing.

We dreamt no sorrow was near,
And in all the glad earth's showing
We saw no thing in the world to fear,
For we held our love as the one thing dear
Of all the world's bestowing.

Child, and mother, and wife,—
What care they how the world is going?
We close our doors on the outward strife,
The closer to cling to the heart's own life,
And set it in fairer showing.

So fair was our path and sweet,
 So daily the dearer growing,
We heard not the march of the muffled feet,
Nor thought of the shadow we soon should meet,
 Or the death-dart he was throwing.

Alas for the years that lie
 Between Love's reaping and sowing !
A tender flower 'neath a smiling sky—
Then clouds and darkness, and it must die,
 Though it rend a heart in the going.

Oh God ! Is it wrong that we
 Should follow our soul's best knowing ?
That we should have prayed for light from Thee
And, choosing the way that was fair to see,
 Chose not the path of Thy showing.

Or, Lord, did the edict go forth,
 From an infinite mercy flowing,
To order for us a desolate hearth,
And pluck by the roots love's life upon earth,
 That in heaven it might be growing ?

Oh help us to bear Thy will ;
And whatever Thy hand be strowing,
Give us power to endure it, and strength to sit still,
In the rooted assurance it cannot be ill
Since it comes of Thy bestowing.

BROKEN STRINGS.

MY harp is turned to mourning,
And all we've sung and said,
The joyous words, sung o'er and o'er,
We may not sing them any more.
My harp is turned to mourning—
For gladness, tears instead,
And all its echoes answer me,
"My Love is dead!"

We sit together sorrowing,
My fingers o'er thee spread,
But all in vain; they will not come—
The old chords now are dead and dumb.
We sit together sorrowing,
And bow the fallen head,—
The only song that we can sing,
"My Love is dead!"

Oh harp ! why are we living ?
 Why should we longer tread
The songless world ? but hasten on,
And follow where our hearts have gone.
Oh harp ! why are we living
 When all our song has fled ?
Thy strings are broken, and my heart, —
 " My Love is dead ! "

"NOTHING IS HERE FOR TEARS."

—*Samson Agonistes.*

WHY should we walk in sorrow day by day,
 Because from all our paths thy life hath fled ?
That life is more than ours in every way ;
 Yet knowing this, we speak of thee as " dead,"
 And pitying, sigh " Alas ! " and shake the head :
Our words but touch the surface, the appearing, —
How strangely must they sound in thy new hearing.

Keep sorrow for ourselves, 'tis not for thee!

“Holier and Happier!” were the words that passed
Thy dying lips, when from thine agony

The loving Lord on whom thy cares were cast
Stretched out His arms and took thee at the last!—
Thy words, when earth was fading into night,
And heaven was breaking on thy new-born sight.

“Holier and Happier!” from the lips of one
Whose soul, half-way to heaven while it spoke,
Heard through the golden gates the Lord’s “Well done,”
And smiling in death’s face, laid down its yoke;
Not all thy great heart’s sorrow, nor the stroke
Of death’s dark utter agony, could quell
The deep unshaken faith that all was well.

“Holier and Happier!”—now thy pain is o’er—
Are words that speak of peace, and breathe a balm
Enshrining all thy memory, more and more,
In such unclouded rest of heavenly calm;
They come to us like words from some high psalm
Begun on earth, but ending elsewhere,
Where sorrow follows not, nor any care,

Within thy great new kingdom, oh my Love !
Forget not those that, waiting, stand without :
We are so poor, and thou so far above
The cares of Time and all the earthly rout,
The purest cannot utterly cast out,—
Oh keep thy promise, bear with us and wait,
Thou first that we shall look for at the gate.

THE REST THAT REMAINETH.

I fret no more,—wherever death shall take thee,
There must be heaven about you where you go ;
Nothing can change, nor death itself unmake thee,
And God that made thee good will keep thee so.

Thy heaven was not to seek in some far region
Apart from what on earth thy heart had known,
For even here we named thee with the legion
Of those whom God hath chosen for His own.

No fancied heaven was thine, of unknown fashion,
Cut off from life, but near us every day ;
Thy love and truth, and God-like great compassion,
Shed light divine upon our common way.

And simple things men daily set their eyes on
Were vassals in the kingdom of thy love,
To bring within earth's lowliest horizon
Remembrance of the noblier life above.

Some glad, God-chosen place beyond death's danger,
Some holier, happier home, is surely thine :
Where goodness is thou canst not be a stranger,
Whilst there is room in heaven for stars to shine.

No light like thine can die in God's dominion ;
And though He summon thee to worlds unknown,
Wherever thou art borne on death's dark pinion,
The resting-place must still be near the Throne.

THE DEATH OF SUMMER.

SUMMER is dead ! Last night the northern blast
Smote into ice within her dewy eyes
The light of life. And as her spirit past,
The breaking morn, struck through with death's surprise,
With passionate tears and burdensome sad sighs,
Called her by name, and raised her fallen head—
But called in vain : too late !—Summer is dead !

Yes, she is dead that was so beautiful ;
She that had love for ever in her face,
And mirth that could betray the wisest fool
To laughter,—she that filled so sweet a place
In all our hearts,—has run her earthly race.
All that is left of her on earth lies low,
Waiting her winter winding-sheet of snow.

And now there is such silence in the air,
It seems as if the pulse of all that is
Were stricken suddenly with mute despair,
Knowing that she is dead ; and all things miss,
In some blind way, their long accustomed bliss.
Earth's voices, all—the winds, the waterflow,
The song of all her birds—is hushed and low.

Silence upon the hills: and on the mere
Motionless shadows of the silent trees ;
If any wind there moves, it moves in fear,—
A sharp short shudder, waking memories
That fall like falling leaves upon a breeze,—
So gently moving, it might be earth's sigh
That so much loveliness should ever die.

So with Thy sorrowing world we plead, O Lord !
Because of joys that come but do not stay ;
Our waiting hearts are sick with hope deferred,—
Bright hope that turns to miserable clay,
And gives us nothing but it takes away.
Speed Thy good time, O Lord ! when all shall know
The summer that shall come, and shall not go.

PICK-MAW-MOSS, HAINING.



AUTUMN SONG.

WEARILY wails the winter wind,
With the sad dead leaves before it flying,
As it mourns for the summer it leaves behind
In all its beauty dying.

And wearily sighs this heart of mine,
With its life's dead hopes around it falling,
And its brief bright hours of sweet sunshine
Gone past beyond recalling.

But hark ! I hear through the moaning hours
A whispered hope of a bright day coming,
When the world again will be clothed with flowers,
Glad bees about them humming,

Be still, my soul, and strong thy hand
Beneath the cross thou moanest under,
For we yet shall stand in the new God-land,
When the world has broken asunder.

THE HAINING.

PLAITED THORNS.

“ By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.—ISA. xxxviii. 16.

I suffered Pain,—such pain as takes the soul,
And wrestles with it, as it were the prey
Of struggling devils, mad beyond control ;—
Such pain that in its pauses night and day,
I clung to God in prayer, and a sigh
That He would let me die :

And lo ! while yet I cried in my distress
That even in death my soul might be released,
Pain seemed to sicken in its own excess,
For then it stalked away, a thing appeased ;
And sainted smiling of a heavenly face
Filled up the empty place.

I suffered Doubt,—those pangs of deep disgrace
Stinging the faithless soul that has allowed
Loose fiends to point their fingers in his face,
Till he forgets God's goodness in a cloud
Of foul suggestions—pride's presumptuous leaven,
That shuts the door of heaven.

Worn out with pain of endless questionings,

I fell asleep, and in a dream-like show

Saw dying faces straining after things

It were no profit any soul should know :

I cried to God : my tempters fled away

Like devils in dismay !

I suffered Loss,—loss inconsolable.

I could not reason it, or think it out,

Or ask God anything,—could only feel

That life had passed away in one wild shout,

And left me dumb for ever, sitting there,

Stroking his yellow hair.

The past was gone : the very chairs seemed new ;

Familiar things upon the walls and floor

Looked strange. The western window's well-known
view

Had light upon't I never saw before.

And all things spoke to me in one low breath,

That only whispered, " Death."

I sat with heavy heart and idle hands,

Feeding on memory many a weary night,

When lo ! across the darkly gleaming lands

Of wondrous death, clad all about with light,

My loss came back, and gave me joy for tears,

Consuming all my fears.

I suffered Hate,—slow hate that bides its time,
Watching occasion with the famished eyes
Of brutes that watch for prey ; suckling in slime
Its hideous offspring, black-mouthed calumnies.
Surely, I argued, this is evil seed,
A wrong without remede.

So, looking not for comfort out of this,
Think how I gladly welcomed him who showed
That even here I was not profitless,—
Man's wrath but wrought in me the will of God :
Yea; that the smiling heavens could find a use
Were hell itself let loose !

I suffer Death,—where all earth's suffering ends.
But now I fear not, for I know heaven's way.
Behind black sorrow's night God's angel stands,
Waiting the dawn of an eternal day.
Since these dark doors but open into light,
Come closer, Death, and smite.



THE DOUBTING HEART.

I.

OH weary life, so dark, so difficult,
Were ever thy fair promises made good ?
Why scatterest thou, and with a breath so rude,
The hopes that bade our youthful hearts exult ?
Oh Power Supreme, that work'st in ways occult,
Why bring to dust the fruit that was our food,
Making a desert where such sweet things stood ?—
Why tempt us on to life's so poor result,
Through this all-sickening gulf that lies between
The will to do, and the accomplished deed ?
Down doubting heart, whate'er thy cross has been ;
Have faith, if nothing else should form thy creed.
What are thy deeds to whom thy heart is seen ?
Trust Him who leads thee, and He still will lead.

II.

Faith, wider faith, alone will give thee peace ;
Only believe it is His way with thee,
And in that light constrain thy soul to see
Life's crosses. Then, but not till then, shall cease

Their power to make the burden of life's lease
A weight of weary years. Still it is He
Even when thou canst not read the dark decree,
For blinding tears that evermore increase.
The greater sorrow shall more greatly win ;
'Tis not for nothing that the soul is driven
Through God-appointed fires of doubt or sin ;
The best-loved souls may be the most forgiven,
With Him who guardeth well the life within,
And breaks the heart on earth, to make it His in heaven.

FOOTSORE.

"We look for another country."

○ HEAVENLY refuge of my soul,
Jerusalem ! I come to thee,
A fainting wanderer at thy gates,
A weary soul that would be free.
On every side cast down, oppressed,
A breaking heart within my breast,
Would God that I could reach thy rest,
Jerusalem ! Jerusalem !

O thou the spirit's only home,
Jerusalem ! to thee I cry ;
The thought of thee alone can give
The power to live, the strength to die.
Through earthly snare, past sorrow's night,
Till faith be merged in perfect sight,
O lead me by thy higher light,
Jerusalem ! Jerusalem !

O holy mother of us all,
Jerusalem ! that I were there, —
That I could lay my burden down,
And reach at last thy blessed air ;
Where weary feet no more shall stray
And grief and pain shall melt away
In splendour of thy perfect day,
Jerusalem ! Jerusalem !

O city of the Christ of God,
Jerusalem ! to thee I come :
In thee alone the rest is found
Where death is dead, and sorrow dumb
Where God Himself shall wipe away
All tears, and change our bitter lay
To singing in thy courts for aye,
Jerusalem ! Jerusalem !

O gladdening vision of my soul,
Jerusalem ! Within the skies
Thy streets of gold, thy gates of pearl,
Are evermore before mine eyes.
Where'er I go, in church or street,
The light above thy mercy's seat,
The deathless song about thy feet,
Jerusalem ! Jerusalem !

THE SOUL'S ATLANTIS.

I.

EARTH-WEARY and earth-worn,
I laid me down with prayer for heaven's safe
keeping,
And tossed upon my bed, till in the morn
God's answer came with sleeping.

I dreamt earth's fight was done,
The evil vanquished, and the battle over,
And I lay resting 'neath a summer sun,
Half hid in waving clover.

Deep in the heart of things,
And outward to the spirit's infinite longings,
God's gift of peace came down on blissful wings,
Filling with happy throngings

The great glad pulse of life,
Till not a thought was left of earth's bequeathing :
The very winds forgot their ancient strife,
And moved with holier breathing,—

A rest so deep and sweet—
No more again for ever to be broken—
For wrong was dead, and sealing its defeat
The Almighty God had spoken.

The prophet's word was truth,
And all the good of holiest books we read in
Had come to pass, and earth's immortal youth
Begun again in Eden.

The promised land at last ;
The pledge of a new earth and a new heaven
Stood now fulfilled, and all earth's bitter past
Forgotten and forgiven.

Beneath the smile of God
Earth's strife was dumb, and all its doubt and error
Fled from before His face, a broken cloud
Of guilty things in terror.

And all was His again,
Perfect and pure as in its first creation ;
A world baptised anew with holy rain
Of His regeneration,

Old things had passed away ;
No creature but possessed some inward token
That made him Heaven's for ever from that day,
In words that were not spoken.

One heart in all the world,
One worship without taint of earthly leaven,
Whose one great cloud of altar incense curled
Far up the fragrant heaven.

One voice, and one alone,
Flowing right onward in a mighty river
Of one clear song to Him upon the throne,
For ever and for ever,

And bless was so complete
I wept for joy, to think the world's weeping
Was done at last, and that the weary feet
Were safe in Heaven's keeping.

II.

While heavenly echoes yet
Were in mine ears, sleep changed to bitter waking ;
As in upon a trusting heart's blest heat
The world's cold light is breaking.

And all my dreaming ceased, —
I rose and drew aside the window awning ;
Far outward in the shivering iron east
A gray cold day was dawning.

The world's dead wall of stone
Beside me yet, with all its old hard features,
The bloodless rock we break our hearts upon,
Earth's miserable creatures.

Down in the hurrying street
I joined the silent faces workward setting.
No time to dream for us, for we must eat
And feed our own begetting.

No time to dream for us,
Life's grim necessities around us gaping,
With tongues that are for ever clamorous,
Whate'er our souls be shaping.

But yet for me and you,
Oh burdened friend unknown, wherever breathing,
Somewhere a world must be whose good and true
Is not of earth's bequeathing,—

Somewhere a life unseen
With nobler strife than but to clothe and feed us;
These hopes that lighten sorrow's dark demesne
Are sent not to mislead us.

And though the world should mock,
Still guard the hope, believing God doth send it,
Let thou no demon doubt of earth's vile stock
Enter thy heart to rend it.

God promises no dreams:
The heavens are true,—it is the earth that's dreaming.
To earth again return her wisest schemes,
To dust her fairest seeming.

And when the end shall come,
When rending heavens from reeling earth shall sever,
That dream shall rise from out the final doom,
To set no more for ever.

LAY NOT THY TREASURE.

LAY not thy treasure at my feet ;
I cannot give thee love for love :
My life with all it had of sweet
Belongs to one in heaven above.
The heart that with the strength of youth
Has truly loved in days before,
Can love again on earth in truth
No more, no more,—
On earth again no more.

The flower that's dying at the root,
Though summer woo it o'er and o'er,
Can never yield its flower or fruit,—
'Twill bud again on earth no more ;
And love whose root is in the grave,
Though love may seek it as before,
Can give what once on earth it gave
No more, no more,—
On earth again no more.

Then take thy treasure unto one
Who yet can fitly love bestow,
And with it all that I can give
Of blessings wheresoe'er it go.
But as for me, I wait for him
Who waits me on life's farther shore ;
For once again on earth I love
No more, no more,—
On earth again no more.

THE BLACKBIRD.

AT SUNSETTING.

LONLEY singer, tell to me
What is it that aileth thee,
And makes thy song so dreary ?
Tell me, am I right or wrong,
Art thou singing sorrow's song ?
Is thy heart a-weary ?

Dost thou hold within thy breast
Longings of a wild unrest
That never can be spoken ?
Has some bird-angel of thy love
Taken wing, the heavens above,
And left thee here, heartbroken ?

How comes it that thy lonely lay
Gives but to the dying day
 All its sweet sad singing ;
And that thy music, gentle bird,
Is silent, or but faintly heard,
 When all the woods are ringing ?

Say, does thy heart, like mine, but sing
Of others' earthly suffering,
 And pity's accents borrow,
That thou, to all the world unknown,
May clothe a suffering of thine own,
 And soothe an inward sorrow ?

Oh, sacred be the soul's regret ;
It brings the sweetest singing yet,—
 Deeper than love's laughter.
The highest bliss is incomplete
That is not made more heavenly sweet
 By tears that follow after :

From secret sources strangely fed,
The singer's heart is comforted
 Beyond this world's dreaming :
Behind earth's curtain of seen things
He hears a voice that ever sings,
And sees the flutter of glad wings
 Through darkest shadows gleaming.

MATER DOLOROSA.

I have a memory deep in my heart,
Clinging aye close to me, never to part.

Sweetly a little face peers into mine,—
I know that little face every line.

Oh that my day were come, death is so slow,
Keeping me waiting here, ready to go.

I would not wait alone, here in the cold,—
I do not want to live here, and grow old.

If I go back to him now, he will know me,
Now that the world has no more to show me.

All that it has of mine, all that it gave,
Lies with that little face, down in the grave.

There with the chilly grass growing above him,
While I am left without, I, that would love him.

There where I cannot stretch hands out to guide him,
Oh that my heart were there, lying beside him.

Come then and take me, death, me, and no other,—
Who should be nearer him than his own mother?

HEIMWEH.

THERE lies a valley lost to sight,
Yet dearer far than all we see ;
Its memory makes earth-darkness light,
And sets the prisoned spirit free ;—

A valley with a purer sky
Than earth's serenest air can show,
Where not a sorrow, not a sigh,
Can enter from the world below.

No weary world of strife and sin,
With death's dread shadow at the close.
But once those blessed fields within
Life leaves behind its earthly woes.

The valley where our loved and lost
Are waiting for us till we come,
When life's dark ocean-path is crossed,
And heavenly voices call us home.

Oh sacred sorrow ! sacred love !
Twin guardians of the higher life,
Teach me, and lift my soul above
The world's distracting cares and strife.

Watch thou the gateways of my heart,
Lest evil angels enter in,
And rob me of the better part,
The higher place my soul would win.

Oh save me from the world's desires ;
In all its paths that lie in wait,
Oh shame them with thy holy fires,
And purify and consecrate.

And when heaven's higher light is screened,—
When sick at heart I faint and fall,
And life seems but a mocking fiend,
A hollow mask deluding all,—

Oh then let memory enter in
And take possession, heart and head,
To purify from self and sin,
And keep me worthy of the dead.

Until that valley lost to sight
Shall rise unto the perfect day,
And Heaven's renewed and conquering light
Shall chase the clouds of death away.

"SHOW ME THY WAY."

A LENTEN HYMN.

SHOW me Thy way, O Lord !
All else I now resign :
I ask no other word
Or way, O Lord, but Thine.
Of earth's bleak road and rough
My soul has seen enough.

I've proved this poor world's worth,
All that its ways afford ;
I ask no more of earth—
Show me Thy way, O Lord !
In all the vain world's best
My soul can find no rest.

Show me Thy way, O Lord !
Whate'er the warrant saith,
Send peace, or send a sword,
Send life, Lord, or send death.
If they but show Thy way,
I shall not say them nay.

Earth-guides I leave behind,
With all their ways abhor'd,—
Blind leaders of the blind ;
Show me Thy way, O Lord !
I care not what men name it,
Whether they praise or blame it.

Show me thy way, O Lord !
And from Thy throne above,
Oh bind me with the chord
Of Thy redeeming love.
That I may know at last
Thou hast forgiven the past.

And when, at Death's decree,
I cross the frowning ford,
My prayer still shall be,
Show me Thy way, O Lord !
Till the sweet heavens restore
My loved ones evermore.

A LEAVE-TAKING.

ONCE more I leave
The land that holds thy dear dead heart ;
And though it cannot be but I should grieve,
We do not part.

These tears I shed
Make sorrow's vision strong and clear.
The dead are not far from us : Thou art dead,
And thou art near.

And though I go
Where sunny southern waters wave,
While northern winds shall beat the blinding snow
About thy grave,—

My heart is fed
By faith that tempers every tear.
The living may forsake us : Thou art dead,
And thou art near.

*“HE SHALL BE FOR A
SANCTUARY.”*

WHEN I am there ! beside my secret Friend,
Of all my earthly friends beyond compare,
A Friend no earthborn soul can comprehend
Till press'd to earth with more than soul can bear :
The burden of its sin and sin's despair ;—

When I am there, my burden I unbend ;
Oppression cannot follow or offend,
Nor poisoned arrow pierce me unaware,
When I am there.

Behind His shield, the world is fresh and fair,
Though sin contest possession to the end.
I know my safety ; Evil may not dare
To cross the inner line that I contend :
The devil himself can only stand and stare,
When I am there !

WHEN APRIL COMES.

WHEN April comes through sun and gloom,
And tempts from winter's willing womb

The life that gladdens flower and tree,
The frisking lambs are on the lee,
And linnets in the budding broom.

All happy living things for whom
Our kindly mother-earth makes room,
Seem happier in their new-born glee
When April comes,

Alas ! alas ! its fairest bloom
Is poor and powerless to illumine
The darkness which it brings to me ;
Henceforth, in all my years to be,
I plant fresh flowers about a tomb
When April comes.

A MESSAGE.

I LAY awake the whole night through,
With that old sorrow at my breast,
Which, spite of all that I could do,
Still came between me and my rest.
Thinking of those that are no more,
My soul went back to death's wild wonder.
Sounding the gulf from shore to shore
That keeps our hearts asunder ;—

Bearing the burden life assigns
To him who spends his dearest breath
Upon the land where no sun shines,
And faints beside the gates of death.

Worn out and weary of the night,
I watched the eastern window awning,
Where first would come the welcome light
To tell me day was dawning

And as I watched, a little bird
Came twittering to my window-sill,
And sang as if its happy word
Would make me glad against my will.
It gave a voice to what was dumb,
And quenched in tears my burning sorrow :
It seemed some unknown heart had come
To bid my own good-morrow.

And loud and louder as it sang,
I seemed to hear a holier strain,
When from the east the dawning sprang
And smote the glittering window-pane.
I questioned not, I rose from bed,
I felt my life new courage taking :
That bird was sent me from the dead
To keep my heart from breaking.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS.

WHAT means this wondrous world of ours?
In heaven she wanders night and day,
The circuit of her ceaseless powers,
With suns to light her on her way.

Now all her mighty mountain towers
Roll into darkness, one by one,
And now her bosom decked with flowers
Is heaving upwards to the sun ;

Now floating through the azure lake
Of summer : then anon she hears
The brooding tempest rise and wake
The crashing thunder of the spheres.

Can all this grandeur cease to be ?
And can this world have only been,
By some inscrutable decree,
The herald of a world unseen ?

Can we, earth's creatures of a day,
Who live and die upon her breast,—
Men formed and fashioned of her clay,—
Alone have life beyond the rest?

Strange thought! Oh, who can understand,
That voice—a whisper at the most—
Which brings, as from a far-off land,
The sense of something we have lost?

Is earth itself not rich with dreams
Of unknown oceans, golden-isled,
For those who hold the holier gleams
And elder instincts of the child?

Turn where we will, 'tis all the same,—
That trackless wind, the heaving sea,
The mighty rivers: all we name
Are emblems of eternity.

Ask of the snow-clad mountain peak
What means the world? no voice replies;
The hoary summit does not speak,
But points thee mutely to the skies.

Nay more ; stand there amid the snows,
And strain to listening all thy powers,
And hear the language no man knows,
The murmur of a world not ours.

Until these outer voices find
The inner hearing of the man,
And wake the power within his mind,
That bridges more than reason can.

The thoughts within our hearts all move
To one conclusion : Life must lead
To higher ground than we can prove ;
Else wherefore should these voices plead ?

For this is truth, all truths above :
He never held the sacred fire
Who knew the limit of his love,
Nor wished it vaster, holier, higher.

And then, when death takes those away
Who stood beside us in the strife,
Ah then ! shines out the great new day,
The one reality of life.

At that dread touch the threatening cloud,
Once black with doubt, dissolves in dew,
And all earth's voices sing aloud
The song that maketh all things new.

Roll on with all thy mortal freight !
Roll upward in the heavenly blue,
Oh wondrous world ! By day and night
We know the land we travel to.

In every sunset's golden flight,
The purple domes, the shining spires,
The long sweet fields of level light,
We see the home of our desires.



THE TWO SEAS.

“ When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee.”

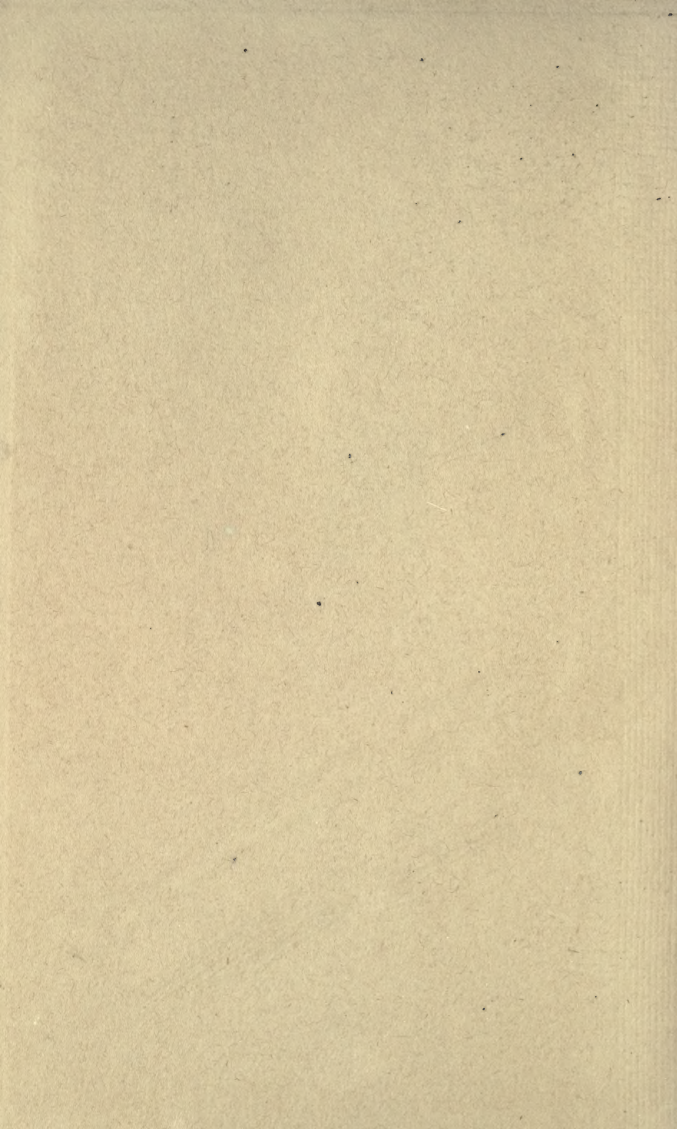
EACH night we are launched on a sea of sleep ;
No doubts disturb us, no fears annoy.
Though we plough the waves of the darkened deep,
We know we are safe in the Master's keep,
And the morning brings us joy.

What dread, then, should daunt us, what doubt distress,
When on Death's dark sea we are launched alone ?
In that deeper sleep, should we trust Him less ?
Shall we limit to earth His power to bless ?
Will the Father forsake His own ?

He made us His children ; He bears us to bed ;
And whether our sleep be the first or last,
What matters it where our souls are led,
If our trust in the God of the living and dead
Should only hold us fast ?







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